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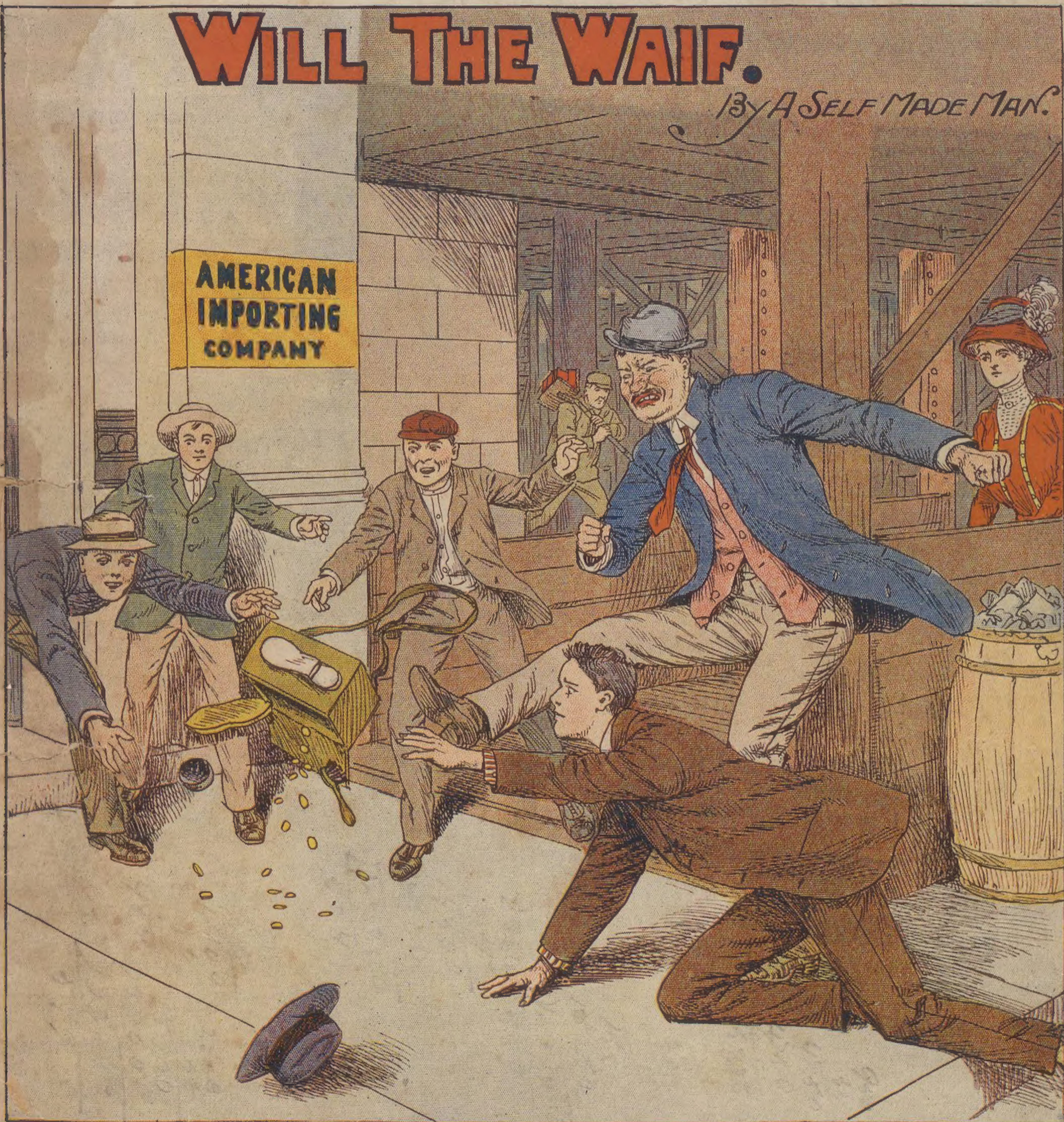
STORIES
OF
BOYS

WEEKLY.

WHO MAKE
MONEY.

WILL THE WAIF.

By A SELF MADE MAN.



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It flew through the air and Will's money dropped out of it.
The street gamins made a rush for the coins.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

WILL, THE WAIF

OR,

From Bootblack to Merchant

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

OUR HERO MAKES HIS BOW.

"Come here, you young sculpin!" roared Bill Hooley, from the foot of a rickety flight of stairs, pounding the wall with his hairy fist, to give more emphasis to the command.

Will Warren, ragged in attire, but good-looking and manly for his age, dropped the book he was reading, sprang hastily on his feet, and darted to the open door of a wretched garret where he slept and spent a part of his waking hours in an earnest effort at self-improvement.

"I'm coming, Bill," he answered.

"Then shake yourself, d'ye hear? I've got no time to waste on you," said the man in hoarse, unpleasant tones.

In person he was just as unpleasant as his voice—a heavily-built, hard-looking ruffian, who had knocked Will around like a shuttlecock ever since the lad could remember.

Will knew that Bill was not his father, nor did the man ever lay claim to such relationship; but the boy stood in such terrible fear of him that he did not dare to run away from him, as he had often been tempted to do.

Will hustled down the stairs, and presently saw the burly form of the ruffian standing below with a candlestick in his hand, for it was growing dusk outside, and the short hall, being lighted only by a very dirty pane of glass over the front door, was particularly dark and dingy at that hour.

The illumination of the candle threw the man's face into relief against the shadows behind, and Will thought it never looked more forbidding than it did then.

Indeed, as the boy came nearer he remarked that an unusual pallor rested on it and that it bore an added look of fierceness.

"You're home early, Bill," ventured Will, in his customary conciliatory tone.

"S'pose I am, what's that to you?" roared the man.

"Nothing. You don't usually——"

"Never mind what I don't usually do. Go and get supper at once, and get a hustle on, or I'll smash you. I'm in no humor for any nonsense, mark that!"

Bill never was in a humor for any nonsense from Will.

He took it from companions who frequently made the house their own for various lengths of time; but they were all birds of a feather, though none of them ever had much on Bill.

He was feared to some extent even by those who were hail-fellow-well-met with him, for he was mighty handy with his sledge-hammer fists; and when he was drunk and particularly ugly he was liable to use a knife, as more than one rascal knew to his cost.

Will knew that Bill had sent several of his friends to the hospital, but the police never found out who had done the stabbing.

The wounded men wouldn't peach, and the witnesses didn't dare, even if they felt disposed to do so, which, as a rule, they didn't.

Will hurried into the kitchen and started the fire.

Then he put on the kettle to boil water for the coffee.

While that was under way he began peeling several potatoes, which he intended to slice up and fry raw.

By the time the potatoes were in the pan and salted, the water was bubbling, and the boy made the coffee, and put the pot on the fire to boil.

Bill in the meantime was stalking around his own room on the floor above.

What he was doing Will had no idea, but he thought something unusual was up, for Bill didn't often spend

much time in his sleeping quarters except when he turned in for the night, which was seldom before two or three in the morning, when he slept through till noon to make up lost time.

After the potatoes were done Will proceeded to fry some ham and eggs.

When supper was ready he went to the foot of the stairs and called to Bill.

That worthy came down, and drawing his chair up to the table, helped himself to the food; but he did not seem to be as hungry as usual.

He scowled at his plate and the food as though they had done him an injury, and he scowled at Will occasionally by way of variety.

Clearly he was in very bad humor, and Will didn't like his looks.

He was sure something had gone wrong with Bill, and he was afraid to say a word lest the man should open on him.

The meal was eaten in silence, and when it was over Bill pushed back his chair, pulled out his pipe, filled it and began to smoke, while the boy started to clean up.

"Drop them things and attend to me, d'ye hear?" said Bill after the lapse of five minutes.

Will obeyed.

"I'm going away, youngster, and I don't know when I'll be back."

"Going away! Where to?"

"None of your blamed business," scowled Bill.

That settled Will, and he shut up.

Bill puffed away in silence, and the boy waited for him to make the next move.

After a few moments he went into the front room and peered out into the darkness of the street, which was little better than a road, for that section of upper New York was not thickly populated yet, though building was going on in many places.

The streets had been cut through, and gas lamps, which twinkled in the gloom, put up, but there was little travel in the neighborhood, particularly at that hour.

Bill acted unusually strange and nervous.

He wasn't at all like his customary self, except in his general deportment toward Will, which was always about the same—a browbeating way, as though it was his purpose to keep the lad in a state of perpetual subserviency and terror.

Instead of returning to the kitchen the ruffian went up to his room.

Will took that as a signal to go on with his work.

Fifteen minutes later the man returned to the kitchen with an envelope in his hand, on which was written a name and address not in his own handwriting.

"Look here, young un," he said, "I want you to do an errand for me."

"All right, Bill."

"You take this letter down to the man whose name is written on it, and bring me whatever he gives you. Understand?"

"Yes, Bill."

"If you're gone longer than I think is right I'll half kill you when you get back," said the ruffian, menacingly.

"I'll hurry, Bill."

"See that you do, or it'll be worse for you."

Will took the letter and looked at the name and address on it.

He knew where the place was, for he had been there before several times on errands for Bill.

It was a common locality on the east side of Third avenue below the Harlem river.

"Here's your carfare," said Bill, handing him a dime. "Now get a move on."

Will put on his hat, which was in keeping with the rest of his attire, and hurried out of the house.

He went straight to the nearest elevated station and got a train bound south.

He took his seat in a corner, away from anybody else.

There were but few people in the car, and they paid no attention to him.

He got off at the station nearest to his destination and hurried in the direction of the East river.

He reached a series of squalid tenements.

The numbers of most of them were hardly legible, but Will didn't have to look for a number, as he knew the house.

The block he sought was alive with men, women and children, mostly the latter.

They filled the doorway, through which he pushed his way.

The lower hall was narrow, and lighted by a dim lamp with a dirty reflector.

He mounted a narrow staircase to the next floor, and knocked at a door.

It was opened by a rough-looking man.

Will knew the fellow by sight, and he was the person he was to deliver the note to.

The man recognized him at once.

"Come in, young feller," he said, and the boy entered the rudely furnished room.

"I've brought a letter from Bill," said Will.

"I s'posed you'd come from him. What does he want?"

"I don't know. It's in the letter, I suppose."

The man, whose name was Spiff Paterson, took the note and read it by the light of a lamp which stood on the table.

"Ho!" he exclaimed. "So Bill is up against it at last."

"Up against what?" asked Will, curiously.

Paterson looked at him attentively a moment and then said:

"Didn't he tell you?"

"No. Bill never tells me anything."

"Then I guess I'd better not, or Bill mightn't take it kindly. Sit down and look out of the window till I get what Bill wants."

Paterson entered the next room and Will sat down by the open window.

There was a great contrast in the scene from the place he lived.

Here it was all life and motion—up his way almost complete isolation.

He wondered why Bill preferred such an out-of-the-way habitation.

He didn't know that Hooley was a squatter, and during the many years they had lived in the upper Bronx he hadn't been asked to pay a cent of rent.

The property was in the courts, and had no acknowledged owner.

Will was greatly interested in the scene, for he yearned for companionship.

We cannot say that he took to the denizens of that neighborhood, notwithstanding that he had been brought into contact with the questionable associates of Bill Hooley all his life.

There was implanted in Will's nature an instinct that impelled him to lean toward what was right, and fortunately the ruffian who controlled his actions never tried to make him follow in his own footsteps.

The only interest Bill seemed to have in him was to make a servant out of him, and the boy proved so useful in that respect that the man was satisfied to let him do as he pleased otherwise.

Will took to book knowledge like a duck to water.

Although he never went to a school, he was taught the rudiments of an education by the housekeeper that Bill had when the lad first came under his control.

In fact, Bill got the housekeeper solely to attend to the boy, who was very young when he got him.

How he came to get Will, and who the boy really was, appeared to be a mystery known only to the ruffian.

As Will leaned out of the window and took in the sights around him there came a sudden scream from the entrance of one of the tenements on the other side of the street.

The persons around the doorway parted and a ragged girl, with golden ringlets, and a face that would have served a painter as a model for the Madonna, dashed out, followed by a dark-skinned, lightly-built man of sinister countenance.

He held a long rattan in his hand.

Overtaking the girl, he began to lay it over her back and arms with what Will thought inhuman severity.

The girl's pitiful cries filled the air, but no one offered to interfere.

"You'll kill me! You'll kill me!" screamed the girl.

She sank to the ground, and the man continued to strike her.

Will's blood boiled at the sight.

He couldn't stand it.

"The brute means to murder her," he breathed. "Why doesn't somebody stop him?"

The people knew better than to butt in.

They knew that Flavio Ladrone was a bad man to monkey with.

He carried a knife, which he would use as quick as a wink.

The whole neighborhood sympathized in a rough way with Palmyra, as she was known, but they thought prudent to confine their sympathy among themselves.

Ladrone, on this occasion, seemed mad with rage, and he beat the girl more than he probably would have done otherwise.

He certainly would have made a hospital case of it had not interference cut him short.

Out from the tenement door rushed Will, and dashing at the Italian he smashed him in the face with all his strength, sending him staggering a yard away.

CHAPTER II.

A BOY WITH GRIT.

The Italian didn't fall.

He was thoroughly taken by surprise, for he wasn't accustomed to being roughly handled.

He stood for a moment or two and glared at the boy, who had not only come between him and his victim, but had struck him as well.

A hundred eyewitnesses were looking on, and they held their breath.

They expected nothing short of a murder the moment the man started to act.

They recognized Will as a stranger, and they knew that nobody but a stranger would have had the temerity to do what the lad had done.

Palmyra looked up at Will as he stood with flashing eyes and heaving breast almost over her, his fists clenched, and his whole attitude that of a young champion.

"Hooray!" shouted a bunch of kids, giving vent to their admiration for his performance.

The shout woke Ladrone up.

With a foreign oath he rushed at the boy, and struck at him with the rattan.

Will dodged and escaped the whizzing instrument.

The man raised it again to repeat the attempt, hissing foreign imprecations.

Will grabbed his arm, snatched the rattan from his grasp and broke it in two.

He couldn't have done anything that would have provoked Ladrone more, short of another blow, for the Italian prized that rattan for its many qualities.

With a hiss of rage he put his hand to his neck and flashed out an ugly-looking, thin knife.

Will saw his danger, and quick as a flash he smashed the man on the point of the chin.

The Italian went down, knocked out completely, and the knife fell ringing on the stones.

Will stopped and picked up the weapon.

Then he looked at the man, who lay dazed and half unconscious.

Out of the window above leaned Spiff Paterson.

He had been a witness of the last part of the scrap.

He had expected to see the boy knifed and had drawn his revolver to shoot the Italian before he could accomplish his purpose, for Spiff had a grudge against Ladrone, but the boy's rapid action saved him the commission of a crime.

Spiff left the window and hurried to the sidewalk with a bundle under his arm.

Walking over to Will, he said:

"You're all right, young feller. I like your grit. If you ever want a friend, Spiff Paterson'll stand by you. Now take this bundle and git."

"But the girl!" cried Will.

"Never you mind about her. I'll see that the dago doesn't foller you. Get a move on before a cop shows up," said Paterson.

Mindful of Bill's injunction to lose no time, Will took the bundle and offered the knife to the man.

"Keep it," said Spiff. "It's a good thing for Ladrone to lose it."

Palmyra was now on her feet.

"I thank you for saving me from Flavio. I am very grateful to you," she said to Will. "I shall never forget you—never."

She seized the boy's hand that held the knife and pressed it to her lips, then she darted across the street and disappeared into the tenement.

As Will passed up the street a hundred eyes followed him in admiration.

He had done something no one believed possible, that was to beard the Italian to his face, disarm him and escape without a scratch.

Will got home as soon as he could.

Bill was watching for him and let him in.

He took the bundle and then flashed the candle in the boy's face.

"Now, you sculpin, you and me is goin' to part right now; p'raps for good," he said.

"Part!" cried the surprised boy.

"Yes. Ain't you glad of it?"

Will made no reply.

Perhaps he was glad to be relieved of a hard master, who kept him down in life, but he could hardly believe his emancipation was to be real.

Besides, the astonishing communication came to him so suddenly that it almost took his breath away.

If Bill was going to leave him for good, what was he to do?

He hadn't a friend in the world, nor a penny of money.

He would have to get out and hustle for his own living, but such a change was a welcome one.

Though he had a certain feeling for Bill, because he had always lived with him, he really was glad to get away from him, and he hoped it would be for good.

"I've knocked you around kind of roughly, and you've never squealed. Spiff says you're the right kind, and I guess you are. I wouldn't lose you if I could help it, but I've got to dust, and I can't take you with me."

"Where are you going, Bill?"

"None of your blamed business where I'm goin'. What do you care? You'll be your own boss after this, and I guess you're able to fight your own way. Here's a fiver to keep you goin' till you find a way to make somethin' yourself."

He dropped the bundle and shoved a bill into Will's hand.

"Now go upstairs, pack your things in a piece of paper, and get out."

"What, to-night!" almost gasped Will.

"Yes, to-night," cried Bill, fiercely. "I'll give you fifteen minutes to make yourself scarce. If you ain't gone by that time you'll hear from me. Understand?"

Will knew his tyrant well enough to understand that he always meant what he said, so without another word he ran upstairs to the garret to gather his few belongings together.

These included three books, very precious to him.

One was the rudiments of English grammar, the second

was a well-thumbed arithmetic, and the third was a copy of Robinson Crusoe, with the last chapters missing.

He hustled everything into a bag, tied the end tight with a piece of cord, and was downstairs inside of the allotted time.

Bill was moving around in his room.

"Good-by, Bill," he said, stopping at the door.

"Good-by, you sculpin," came the reply.

As Will descended the stairs he heard Bill's door open.

The man who came out into the gloom of the landing didn't look like Bill except in bulk.

His face was covered with a heavy beard, and his clothes had the cut of a longshoreman or sailor.

His hands and what little of his countenance as showed was darker than Bill had ever looked.

The voice, however, was Bill's, as it bellowed down after Will.

"Look here, you young sculpin, don't you dare come back to this house again. Mind, on your life, don't come back. Get down somewhere and stay there. The best thing you can do as a starter is to take to blackin' gents' boots. You'll make enough to keep you. When you get older you can try somethin' else. Now git."

The man listened till he heard Will unlock the door and let himself out, then he went down and secured it again.

Going back to his room he opened the front window and watched the boy on his way down the street.

Will went slowly, with his bag over his shoulder, for he was considering where he should spend the night.

As soon as his figure disappeared in the darkness the man slammed down the window.

"That's the last I'll ever see of him, I reckon," he muttered, as he resumed packing a grip. "The world's all his own now. I expected to make a good thing out of him one of these days, but that infernal job this afternoon has put a spoke in the game. Curse the luck!" he growled, savagely. "I had to do it to save myself. Bah! If he hadn't pulled a gun things might be different with him. I can hear that cry he gave yet. Will I ever get it out of my head? He ain't the first man I've soaked, but he's the first I've——"

He broke off with an imprecation, and hurried his movements.

Fifteen minutes later he was downstairs with his grip, unlocking the back door.

He reconnoitered the neighborhood cautiously and then stepped out, shutting the door softly after him.

He glanced around each corner of the building, and listened attentively.

Only distant sounds broke the silence of the night.

The stars twinkled softly overhead, but there was no moon to light up the landscape.

Satisfied that there was no one near he started off across the broken ground toward the next street at a fast gait.

Hardly had his form been swallowed up in the obscurity than the rumble of wagon wheels sounded down the street.

It stopped at the street corner and three men got out of the vehicle.

Two hurried to the front of the house and one to the rear.

The man at the back found the door yielded to his touch.

"Our bird has flown, I fear," he muttered.

"The door here is open," said the first man. "That looks as if he skipped out, if he's been here. We'll go in and investigate. I understand there is a boy living with him. A young pal of his, of course. If he's gone off with him we'll be better able to track the pair."

They entered the house and flashed dark lanterns around.

"You stay at the back door, in case they should be hiding here, and make a dash to escape. I'll let Jim in at the front."

"What's the matter with locking the door and removing the key?"

"No. You've got to watch to see that they don't drop from an upper story if they're here."

The house was thoroughly searched by two of the men, but all indications showed that the late occupants had gone.

"They've gone all right," said one of the men.

"That's evident. However, you must stay here on the watch, on the chance that the boy might come back. Hooley, himself, is clearly gone for good."

Two of the men returned to the patrol wagon, which then drove off the way it had come.

The three were detectives who wanted Bill Hooley badly.

Then silence fell on the neighborhood again; but though the officer in hiding remained half of the night on the scene, his vigilance was not rewarded.

Nobody came near the house.

The two strangely contrasted persons who had occupied the place for six years were miles away by that time, and miles apart from each other.

What the future held for each was at that moment a sealed book.

One faced a new and useful life, but the other—

CHAPTER III.

WILL STARTS AS A BOOTBLACK.

Will walked somewhat aimlessly toward Third avenue.

At the first saloon he came to he looked at the clock and saw that it was close to ten.

"I must find a lodging-house for to-night," he said. "I guess I'd better go in here and change my bill, so that I can hide most of the money somewhere about me."

He entered the saloon and asked the bar-keeper to break the note for him.

The man was a good-natured fellow and readily obliged him, giving him four one-dollar bills and the rest in change.

Outside, Will put the bills in his shoe and then went on.

When he reached Third avenue a boy came along with some papers under his arm.

"Extry! Full account of the murder on Boston Road. Extry!"

Will stopped and looked at him.

Somehow his ears tingled at the grewsome announcement.

He had read the accounts of many murders and other outrages in the papers that Bill brought to the house, but none of them had interested him, or startled him, like this bare report from the lips of a newsboy.

Just why he should be interested in it he could hardly say, and yet he was.

On the spur of the moment he stopped the boy and bought a paper.

It was the sporting extra of a live newspaper, but was underlined "Nine O'clock Special."

On the first page a glaring scarehead announced that an old money-lender named Matthew Brandon had been murdered late that afternoon in his home on Boston Road.

He was shot through the heart with his own revolver, which lay on the floor at the feet of the corpse, when the crime was discovered some time afterward by the house-keeper, who had been away during the afternoon visiting friends.

Will read the story eagerly under the light of a street lamp.

Finally he reached that part in which it was stated that from a clue found in the room the police believed the murder was committed by a crook who had been known to the authorities for many years as a dangerous fellow, and suspected as having been concerned in a score of robberies, covering several years, none of which, however, could be brought to his door, owing to lack of evidence.

The man was known as the "Gorilla," owing to his long arms and great strength, but his everyday name was Bill Hooley.

Will dropped the paper with an exclamation.

Bill Hooley a murderer—he couldn't believe it.

And yet, after what had happened at the house that evening since Bill's return home—the announcement he made that he was about to leave right away for some place which he would not divulge, compelling him to throw his companion on his own resources—was sufficiently out of the common to lead Will to suspect the worst.

"If Bill is guilty of this crime he is worse than I thought he was," thought Will, picking up the newspaper. "Judging from what I know of him he is a dangerous man when under the influence of liquor; but I did not think he was bad enough to kill a person in cold blood when he had his senses about him. I'm afraid he did it, though, for he acted mighty queer after he came home; and he never would have sent me adrift if he hadn't been compelled by unusual circumstances to get away from New York. Well, it's his funeral. He won't dare come back, and I'll never see him again, which suits me first rate. At the same time it cuts off all hope I had of learning how I came under his charge. He might have told me the truth some day, though he always fought shy of it up to the present. It can't be helped. The world is before me to make the best I can out of it, and some day I hope to amount to something even if I am obliged to start at the very bottom of the ladder."

He shoved the paper in his pocket and walked slowly down Third avenue.

No one but a homeless waif knows what it means to be adrift in a great city without a friend.

Will felt at that moment as if he was about as unimportant a bit of humanity as the world could boast.

It was a new sensation for him to realize that he had to depend wholly on his own efforts for his bread and butter.

He had led a rocky life, it is true, ever since he could remember, but Bill was a good provider, for he always had

money, wherever he got it from, and Will had never had to worry about where his food was coming from.

"I don't know that I can do better than to take Bill's advice and turn bootblack," he said to himself; "but I'll have to learn the ropes before I can do much at it, and the only way of doing that is to get acquainted with some bootblack and get him to give me points on the business."

He had heard about the newsboys' lodging-house way downtown, and he decided that would be the proper place for him to apply for a lodging that night.

He saw a policeman standing close to the elevated station stairs, and walking up to him he asked him how he could reach the lodging-house in question.

"Take a train down to the City Hall station, and then you'll be near it. Anyone in that neighborhood will direct you to the place," replied the officer.

So Will followed directions, and in something over an hour landed at the station in question.

As he stepped into Park Row he spied a policeman, and he asked him where the newsboys' lodging-house was.

The officer told him that it was only a short distance away, and directed him how to find it.

Though Will had never been so far downtown before he had no difficulty in reaching the place he was after, and applying for a night's lodging he was taken in.

In the morning he made the acquaintance of several of the boy lodgers, and one of them proving to be a bootblack, he agreed, if Will treated to breakfast, to show him where to purchase an outfit, and afterwards take him down to his stamping grounds and show him how to shine shoes.

Will gladly stood the breakfast for his new friend, whose name was Bob Short, and an hour later he and Bob were on the scene of operations.

It didn't take Will long to pick up a sufficient knowledge of the business to enable him to start in, and very proud he was of his first job.

His initial customer was an old gentleman of benign aspect.

The ordinary price for a shine was five cents, but the old gentleman liked his face and paid him ten cents.

It was the first money he had ever earned, and he determined to keep that coin as long as he could.

He put it away by itself in one of the pockets of his shabby vest, and then looked around for another customer.

He soon secured one, a pompous-looking merchant on his way to his store, and Will treated him to the best shine he could produce, in deference to his fine clothes and important bearing.

The boy wondered if he would give him a dime, too, for he looked as if he could well afford to; but he didn't.

Thus the morning passed away, and by half-past twelve he had earned forty cents, independent of the first dime.

"I'm not doing so badly," he said to Bob Short, when his new friend joined him.

"You're doing fine for a beginner."

"How much have you taken in?" asked Will.

"Eighty cents. Are you hungry? Let's go and eat. I know a cheap joint where we can fill up for fifteen cents."

"Then we'll go there," replied Will, who was hungry after his new exertions.

It was quantity and not quality that Will found in that hash-house.

In those days food had not soared to its present high figure, and the man who bossed the joint was able to produce quite a spread and still make money.

Will and Bob Short filled up and were satisfied they had got their money's worth.

They then returned to their stamping grounds.

Many of the bootblacks kept their receipts in their box, probably because their pockets were not safe receptacles for coin.

At any rate they found they could make change quicker that way.

This practice was followed by Bob, because he was accustomed to it, though his pockets had no holes.

When he saw Will diving into his trousers for the necessary change to a quarter he suggested that he adopt the same method.

As Will wanted to follow the customs of the business he decided to do so, and this fact led to the loss that afternoon of a part of his day's receipts.

It was about five o'clock that a man came swaggering down the street with a pair of muddy shoes.

Will and three others made a dive for him, scenting a customer.

Bob was the only one not after the job, for he was busy at the moment shining the shoes of one of his "regulars," the manager of the American Importing Company, which establishment was close by.

"Shine, sir!" cried Will, who was the first to reach the newcomer.

"Shine! Shine! Shine!" yelled the other three, boisterously.

The man glared at the four and was about to pass on when a sudden idea struck him.

He grinned malevolently, as he singled Will out and told him to get busy.

Will, proud of the fact that he had caught on in place of the others, which he reckoned something of a feat for a new one at the business, unslung his box and dropped it at the man's feet.

Then something happened that took the new boy as well as the bunch by surprise.

Just as Will got down on his knees the man gave his boot-blackening kit a tremendous kick.

It flew through the air and Will's money dropped out of it.

The street gamins made a rush for the coins.

The man, with a self-satisfied grin walked away, while the victim of the disagreeable joke gazed stupefied on the scramble for his money, not a coin of which he had the faintest chance of getting back.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STOLEN WALLET.

Will lost about fifty cents of his first day's earnings, and he was rather glum over it for a while.

Bob sympathized with him.

"That galoot ought to have been pulled in for playin' such a nasty trick," he said.

"I hope I won't run against another like him soon," replied Will.

"It ain't likely that you will, though you'll meet all kinds

of men, and some of them ain't angels when they ain't in good humor."

"If I'd kept my money in my pocket I wouldn't have lost it," said Will, regretting now that he had adopted the custom of using his box for a cash receptacle.

"Don't worry," said Bob, "it won't happen again. That guy was half drunk, I guess, and he ain't no good, anyway."

Bob broke away, for he spied another of his "steadies" coming along, and Will looked around for a customer.

The other bootblacks gathered around to guy him, and laugh over his misfortune.

Will took their chaffing good-naturedly, and pretty soon one of them proposed a game of "craps."

He was invited to join in, but declined, because he didn't know anything about the game, which was for penny stakes.

He contented himself with watching the group, and at the same time keeping an eye out for a customer.

The game was so simple that he soon got on to its fine points, if it can be said to have any, but while the bunch were deeply interested in it, Will secured a customer and was soon busy earning another nickel.

A steady stream of clerks, bookkeepers and other employees now filled the sidewalks, for business downtown was practically over for the day.

Will and his companions picked up a few along the fringe of the home-going mob, and then as the district deserted they began to gravitate toward City Hall Park.

Here they came into contact with the bunch of bootblacks who considered that they owned the park, and several scraps nearly resulted over the rivalry for customers.

The big fellows chased the little fellows, causing an occasional collision with the public.

It was early in the summer, and the weather was warm, the benches were all filled with loungers, many of whom were wondering where their supper was coming from.

The most ragged bootblack in the neighborhood, however, was not worrying over that fact, for the least prosperous had the price of a plate of "ham and beans," and a cup of coffee, if he couldn't do any better.

No one would have supposed that among the hard-up occupants of the benches were professional men of brilliant intellect, but such was the case.

There were men who had qualified as lawyers; who had held positions on the daily press; who had graduated from big colleges, and who were capable of doing most anything except to earn a living through their own exertions.

Drink had downed some, competition had taken the sand out of others, and the bulk lacked the energy to hustle for a position against adverse circumstances.

The fact that they were well educated, and regarded themselves as professional men, prevented them from looking for common jobs, the small wages of which would have in time put them on their feet, and thus have carried them over their present difficulties.

Will looked many of these loungers over, occasionally striking the better dressed ones for a shine, but he only caught one job from the men on the benches.

When dusk began to deepen into nightfall, Bob rejoined him and they went to a cheap restaurant on Park Row and had their supper.

"You ought to celebrate your first day's work by taking in a show to-night," suggested Bob.

"I'm willing, and I'll stand treat to the gallery," replied Will.

"Bully for you. I'll treat next time," said Bob.

"What theater shall we go to?"

"We'll take in the Thalia, which is the old Bowery under a new name. Ever been there?"

"Never. Last night was the first time in my life that I came below Central Park."

"Go on, you don't mean that," cried Bob, astonished, for Will had told him that to the best of his knowledge and belief he was born in New York City.

"I do mean it."

"What theaters did you ever go to then?"

"The Metropolis, in the Bronx."

"Is that the only one?"

Will nodded.

"And you've always lived in the Bronx?"

"Always, as far as I can remember."

"And the man you lived with so long fired you out on your uppers last night?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"He had to leave the city, and didn't want to take me with him."

"He was a relation of yours, wasn't he?"

"No."

"How came he to take charge of you?"

"I don't know."

"He must have had a reason."

"I suppose he did."

"How about your father and mother?"

"Don't remember them."

"They must have died when you were very little. Perhaps this man was a friend of your folks and took you to keep you out of an asylum."

Will did not answer.

He did not believe that Bob's suggestion came anywhere near the truth.

Anyway he did not care to discuss the matter.

"What kind of show have they got on at the Thalia?" he asked, with the view of changing the subject.

"A dandy one. It's called 'Marked for Death.' Full of excitement. I've seen some of the big bills, and I guess there's shootin' in it to burn."

Part of the foregoing conversation took place between the boys on their way up Park Row toward the theater, which was in the neighborhood of Chatham Square.

Finally they reached the establishment which enjoys the distinction of being the oldest playhouse in the city.

Of late years it has been the home of the Hebrew drama, but at the time of this story it was known as a "combination house."

Third-rate touring gave a continuous feast of more or less lurid melodrama—a new show every week.

Its patrons were almost entirely recruited from the lower East side.

Will bought two gallery seats for fifteen cents each, and he and Bob ascended to the region of the "gods," from which they had a good bird's-eye view of the stage.

"Marked for Death" proved to be full of thrills, and that

was evidently what the audience was looking for, judging by the applause which greeted the "stand and deliver" attitude of the hero and soubrette at critical moments.

There were four strenuous acts, and at the close of the show the gallery gods rose like one man and began a rush for the exit stairs.

There were cat calls, and howling, and scrapping to beat the band, at the height of the crush, and the pushing and scrambling was something fierce.

Will and Bob got separated, and finally reached the sidewalk wide apart.

Will was carried toward Canal street by a flood of humanity without the least idea where he was going.

Finally he disengaged himself from the crowd and began looking for Bob.

His companion, more nimble in getting clear of the rush, was in front of the theater looking for him.

Although the show house was only a short distance away, Will could not distinguish it from where he stood.

Still he knew it must be in the direction whence he had come, and he began to retrace his steps.

He got as far as the entrance to the Atlantic Garden when a couple of well-dressed young fellows came out of that place of amusement.

They seemed to be somewhat under the influence of liquor.

They moved over to a cab that stood close to the curb, and one of them opened the door of the vehicle.

At that moment Will saw a rough-looking fellow, who had followed them out of the building, lift the tail of the jacket of one of them and pull a wallet out of the exposed pocket.

Then he moved off toward Canal street, dropping the pocketbook into his side pocket.

Will's first impulse was to rush up to the young man and tell him he had been robbed, but he realized the loss of time would enable the thief to escape with his booty.

So on the spur of the moment he hurried after the crook, caught up with him at the corner, shoved his fingers into his pocket and got possession of the stolen wallet.

Strange to say the thief did not feel him relieving him of the pocketbook and kept on up the street.

Will, seeing this, did not look for a policeman as he had intended, but started back to restore the young man his property.

The cab, however, had started, and passed the boy on the way.

There were many vehicles in the street, and the roar of a passing elevated train above further confused Will, so that he did not notice the cab as it went on its way uptown.

When he got back to the Garden the cab and the young men had vanished, and he was left with the stolen wallet in his possession.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESULT OF THE ADVT.

Will stood and looked in vain for a sight of the vehicle.

"My gracious! They're gone, and I've got the pocket-book," he said.

At that moment Bob discovered him, rushed up and slapped him on the shoulder.

"I've found you at last," he said. "I was just about to give you up, thinkin' you were on your way back to the lodgin'-house. Hello, what's that you've got in your hand? A pocketbook? Did you find it?"

"No. It was stolen from a young man in front of this place. I chased the thief and got it back. Then when I returned the two young men and the cab were gone."

Bob didn't quite understand his explanation, until he repeated it with the additional facts.

"Well, blow me if that doesn't beat anythin' I ever heard," cried Bob. "A crook pinches a wallet from a young man without him knowin' it, and then you pinch it from the thief without him gettin' on to you. You'd make a pretty good pickpocket yourself."

"I'd like to know how I'm going to return it to the owner," said Will, whose thoughts were wholly engrossed with that problem.

"Don't worry about returnin' it to the owner. You'll never see him again. It's yours now. Let's see what's in it. Maybe there's a wad of money in it which will put you on Easy street."

"No," replied Will, "it isn't mine, and I don't intend to keep it."

"You ain't goin' to be such a fool as to turn it over to a cop, are you?"

"I'm going to try and find the owner myself."

"How can you when he's gone uptown somewhere in a cab?"

"I can't do anything to-night. Maybe if I advertise it the owner will turn up."

"Better look into it and see if it's worth advertisin'. Maybe there isn't more'n a dollar or two in it. It would cost nearly that to advertise it."

Will looked at the wallet.

On the flap were two initials stamped in gold—J. C.

Opening the pocketbook the first thing the boys saw was a roll of bills, the outside one being a \$20 note.

Pulling the wad out Will counted it and saw that it amounted to \$180.

In the next flap was a handsome diamond ring, set for a lady.

"Gee! That must be worth another hundred, sure," said Bob.

In the third flap were several old coins.

There was nothing else as far as the hasty survey disclosed.

Not the least clue to the owner, excepting the initials on the flap, and they did not convey much information.

"I s'pose you'll advertise it," said Bob, as they neared the lodging-house. "If the owner turns up and claims it he ought to give you a good reward."

"I'll take anything he offers me, but I'm not looking for anything special," replied Will.

"You're more honest than most of the fellers I know. They'd freeze on to that boodle and get a good time out of it. I'll bet that ring could be pawned for a good price if you went to the right place. Some pawnbrokers would skin you out of it. I guess it would be risky for you to try to raise any money on it."

Will put the wallet inside his undershirt when he turned

in that night, for fear something might happen to it while he slept.

He found it there safe in the morning and then stuffed it in an inside pocket of his jacket.

"Goin' to advertise that pocketbook to-day?" asked Bob, as they went to breakfast.

"Yes, replied Will.

"Be careful what you say in the advt. Don't describe what's in it, or somebody who ain't the owner will be makin' a claim to it. I've heard that there are people who make a business of watchin' them Lost and Found advts., and answer every one they think they can make anythin' out of."

"Oh, I'll be careful. I won't give any clue for an outsider to work on," replied Will.

On their way to their field of labor for the day they stopped at the publication office of a well-known newspaper and Will inserted an advt. which he thought the owner of the wallet might recognize if he saw it.

He paid for three insertions, and used money from the pocketbook, putting the newspaper receipt in it as evidence to show how the money had been expended.

The answer was to be directed to "W. W., care of Box 65," at the newspaper office.

As the advt would not appear in print until the following morning, Will did not expect to hear from it at the earliest until the following afternoon on his return from his work.

Will did very well that day, making nearly \$2 through the exercise of his brushes and a small amount of muscular exercise.

Bob did about the same, and both lads were well contented when night came again, and they sought the same Park Row restaurant.

Will resisted Bob's invitation to visit the Bowery and take in some of the cheap shows, as the reading-room and library of the lodging-house had more attraction for him.

He was in bed and asleep long before Bob returned from his jaunt with another lad, and in the morning they went to breakfast together as usual.

Will bought a morning paper, and the first thing he did was to look for his advt.

It was there all right, and he read it over to Bob.

That evening on their way to supper they stopped at the newspaper office and Will presented his receipt at the letter desk.

He received three replies, one of them in a female handwriting.

"Two of them are fakirs, if not three," said Bob.

Will opened the lady's letter first.

The writer said she had lost a pocketbook in front of the Atlantic Garden, as Will had so stated in his advt., on the night in question, and she was sure the one in question was hers.

"If he would bring it to her house, No. — East Houston street, she would describe the wallet and what was in it.

"How could she describe it?" said Will. "She didn't lose this wallet, I can swear."

"She won't try to," grinned Bob. "All she wants is to get you there with the book."

"What good will that do her?"

"She'll have a friend there whose business it will be to

bulldoze you into givin' it up. If you should refuse he would probably slug you and take it away from you."

"I could have them arrested then, couldn't I?"

"Yes, if the cops could find them. The chances are if they got hold of what's in that wallet they would dust out to another town."

"Would you answer her and tell her that you know the wallet belongs to a man, and that it isn't worth while calling?"

"No. Tear the letter up. You know she has no claim on it. It's a good thing you didn't give your name and a street address, or she'd call on you."

Will followed Bob's advice and then opened the second letter.

This was from a man, who had also lost a wallet that evening in front of the Atlantic Garden.

He gave an ambiguous description of the article, which would fit any ordinary pocketbook.

He said it had money in it, but he couldn't recall the amount.

He was willing to divide half of it with the finder if the wallet was returned to him at a certain saloon in Fourteenth street.

"He's another fakir for fair. He never lost that pocketbook, or any other, near the Atlantic Garden. Tear it up."

The third writer had missed his wallet soon after leaving the Gardens.

Until he saw the advt. he supposed it had been pinched by some light-fingered chap.

He was glad to hear that the advertiser had found it.

He said it was an ordinary wallet, in good condition, and that it contained a sum of money, he could not remember how much.

It might be \$10 or it might be \$100.

Sometimes he had as much as \$600 about him, and other times a dollar or two.

He couldn't really say how much he had the night he visited the Gardens.

All he was certain about was that the wallet must be his, and he was prepared to come up with a liberal reward for its return.

His initials did not correspond with those on the flap of the wallet, and his answer was far from satisfactory.

Evidently the wallet was not his.

"It's funny how many pocketbooks were lost at the Atlantic Gardens that evening, isn't it," chuckled Bob. "As your advt. runs three days you'll have more answers tomorrow. What a lot of beats there are in the world! They're willin' to do anythin' for a livin' except work."

The boys then went to supper.

CHAPTER VI.

"BIG-FOOT WILLIE."

Bob's statement that Will would have more answers to his advt. was fully verified.

He received two more when he called on the following evening at the newspaper office.

They were very like the others, and Will tore them up.

On his third visit to the office he received five letters.

One was from the same woman who wrote first.

She insisted that the wallet was hers, and repeated her invitation for the advertiser to call on her and bring the pocketbook.

She hinted that she would pay \$25 to get it back.

It was quite clear to Will that none of the replies came from the rightful owner.

Apparently he hadn't seen the advt.

"You'll have to keep the money and the ring," said Bob.

"I certainly intend to till I find the owner," answered Will.

"You'll never find him. Would you know him again if you ever saw him?"

"I think I would. I noticed that he wore a black-enamelled ring, with a diamond, on the little finger of his left hand. He was about twenty-five years old, and he was dressed in swell clothes."

"I guess he won't miss that money, though he might the ring," said Bob. "It is my idea you'll never hear from him."

Bob seemed to be right, for the days passed away and no answer was received from the right person, although Will put the same advt. in another big daily.

Fearing that he might lose the wallet, Will wrapped it up carefully in paper, wrote his name on the outside, and deposited it in the safe of the lodging-house for safe keeping.

Several weeks passed away and Will had grown accustomed to the boot-blackening industry, but he was not contented to remain a bootblack any longer than he could help, although he was making money out of it, which he had deposited in the lodging-house bank to his credit.

During that time he had got well acquainted with a considerable portion of lower New York City.

Every other evening he went tramping around the district east of Park Row and north of Chambers street in company with his boon friend, Bob.

Bob wanted his company, and insisted so that Will felt obliged to fall in with his views.

Bob was a kind of righthawk.

He had no use for the lodging-house except as a place to sleep.

The reading-room had no attractions at all for him.

The lights and life of the Bowery and Grand street acted like a tonic to him after his day's work.

Thus Will came to indulge in night pleasures which he did not actually care for.

There was hardly a place of amusement on the Bowery or its neighborhood that the boys didn't visit.

One night as they were walking up the east side of the Bowery above Chatham square, a glaring sign in front of a building attracted Bob's attention.

The sign read: "Globe Dime Museum. Now on Exhibition: The Fattest Woman in the World—the only and original Living Skeleton—the Beautiful Circassian Girl—Cereese, the Fascinating Snake Charmer—Kirox, the Mysterious Egyptian Fortune Teller—and that most astonishing Freak of Nature, Big-Foot Willie. Walk in and see the marvels now on exhibition for One Dime."

A barker stood at the door, with a long rattan in his hand to keep the urchins at a respectable distance.

He walked back and forth across the wide entrance of an

ordinary store where the show was established, and dilated on the astonishing living curiosities that could now be seen within, dwelling particularly on "Big-Foot Willie."

"Here's a new one," said Bob. "Let's go in."

Without waiting for Will's consent he pranced up to the ticket-office window and planked down two dimes, receiving a couple of small pieces of pasteboard in return from the girl who officiated as ticket seller.

"Come on," said Bob, and Will followed him inside.

The proprietor of the establishment presided at the door.

He had a black mustache, and was in pressing need of a shave.

He wore a silk hat, sack coat and trousers of checker-board pattern.

His flowered vest, to which was attached a cable plated chain, from which dangled a big elk's tooth, was cut in a sort of horseshoe curve, revealing a not over clean shirt, with horizontal red bars an inch in width.

He took the tickets from Bob's fingers, and waved the two boys inside with a kind of majestic dignity.

The odor of tobacco, mingled with unclean sawdust and many other flavors, made the atmosphere particularly rank, and the warmth of the evening heightened the effect of the whole.

The curiosities were mounted in a long row on a platform built to elevate them at a height which would enable the spectators, if there was a crowd, which there was not on this occasion, to observe them with ease.

The lecturer was beginning his round when Bob and Will entered, and he commenced by calling the attention of the audience—five boys, a sailor, and a poorly dressed scrub-woman—to the menagerie, which consisted of two monkeys, a small bear, several guinea pigs, and a bad looking bulldog.

Then he went on to the fat woman, who occupied a rocker, and was fanning herself.

Each of the curiosities was rapidly sketched, and at length the lecturer arrived at the spot where the chief attraction of the show stood—a small, delicate looking youth whose pipe-stem legs rose from a pair of enormous shoes, supposed to encase a pair of feet of abnormal growth.

The crowd gathered around in a semi-circle and regarded "Big-Foot Willie" with not a little interest.

This was something new in the curiosity line.

"Gee! Them feet are big enough for canal boats," said Bob to Will. "It's a fake. Nobody could grow feet that large, not even the fat woman, and this chap is so small and thin you could blow him away with a good breath."

Will agreed that "Willie" was a fake, and the whole show a fraud.

"Now, ladies and gents, give me your kind attention, please. Let me introduce to your notice 'Big-Foot Willie,' the most remarkable curiosity ever put on exhibition, and which the proprietor of this show obtained only after a hot competition with the representatives of the biggest sideshows in the country, and at a cost that would stagger you if I told you. Willie is the highest salaried curiosity in the world, and will shortly retire with an independent fortune."

The lecturer then went on to describe how Willie had been born like any other boy, but that his feet soon out-

stripped all records for pedal extremities, and his shoes had to be made to order from special lasts.

The lecturer, as if by accident, stepped on the toes of one of the big shoes.

"Big-Foot Willie uttered a sharp cry, which had no evidence of a fake about it, and to the astonishment of Bob and Will, real tears coursed down his famished-looking cheeks, and he seemed in considerable pain."

The lecturer made a great bluff of sympathizing with the boy.

"He has very tender toes, ladies and gents," he said, "and when I accidentally trod on them you perceive it called forth a cry from him. There, dry your tears, Willie; I'll get you some nice candy after the show."

The lecturer, having exhausted his stock of curiosities, invited the audience to consult the Egyptian fortune teller, who, for the small sum of a dime, would read their palms and give them a true outline of their past, present and future.

Bob and Will lingered near Big-Foot Will.

"He's a sad-eyed lookin' little beggar," said Bob.

"He is," admitted Will. "I wonder what made him cry out that time. He was certainly hurt."

"I couldn't tell you. P'raps the professor stuck him in the arm with a pin."

"No; he didn't touch him with his hands."

"I don't believe he stepped on his toes. I've got a dollar to bet that his feet ain't any bigger than they ought to be, and are just stuck in a pair of overgrown shoes."

"I guess you're right, Bob," said Will.

"Sure I'm right."

Bob noticed that "Willie" was looking at them in a wistful kind of way.

"Say, Willie," said Bob, "what made you cry out?"

"He hurt me," replied the curiosity.

"How could he when your feet ain't that long? I'm on to them shoes. They're stuffed ones."

"Willie" made no reply.

If there was a secret about the matter he was afraid to give it away.

The audience was now going out, and new spectators coming in.

Bob's roving eyes lighted on a curtain at the end of the platform, near "Willie."

He was greatly interested in getting at the bottom of "Big-Foot Willie's" feet, and the curtain suggested an idea.

The professor was not looking that way, neither were the curiosities.

"Come with me, Will," he said, grabbing our hero by the arm.

Before Will understood his object he was drawn behind the curtain.

Another curtain divided the space from the platform, and the boys found themselves the only occupant of the compartment.

"What are you up to, Bob?" asked Will, puzzled by the companion's actions.

"Keep quiet. I want to get a line on them feet of Willie's, and find out what made him cry out."

Will was curious about the matter, too.

He was satisfied there was some hocus-pocus about it,

though there seemed to be no mistake that the poor little curiosity had been really hurt.

The room was filling up with a larger number of spectators, and the professor was preparing to begin again.

Bob soon discovered that there were no boards nailed against the end of the platform.

Raising the bottom of the red cloth, which answered for a curtain, he looked underneath.

Feeling for a match he lit it and flashed the light under the platform.

Then he crept under and looked up at the boards where the big-footed curiosity stood.

What he saw induced him to continue his investigations more closely.

Finally he whispered to Will to join him.

The lad did.

"Just look there," said Bob. "Those big shoes are screwed to the floor."

"I see they appear to be," answered Will; "but what is that contrivance there? A piece of wood secured to the floor by a hinge, as if it was intended to work upward when the short end is pressed down by that bolt inside a spring."

"That's what it's intended to do," said Bob. "Look closer and you'll see a needle driven into the long end of the wood piece, and above it a small hole. When the bolt is pressed down the long end flies up, sending the end of the needle through that little hole into some part of the little chap's foot. That's what causes him to cry out with pain."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Will, in a burst of indignation. "That's an outrage."

"Of course it is; but what else would you expect from such fakirs as are runnin' this kind of show?"

"It ought to be stopped. They are torturing that little chap," said Will.

He looked around the floor.

"I'll put a spoke in it," he said, picking up a piece of iron.

In a moment, while Bob held up another match, he ripped the apparatus apart.

"That'll stop the game," he said.

"Until they come down and repair it," said Bob.

"I'll prevent that for to-night, and get evidence for the police to raid this show," said Will, completing the work by detaching the piece of wood with the needle altogether. "Now come on. We must get away before they get on to us."

They returned to the empty compartment outside.

The lecturer had reached the big-footed boy again and was telling his history.

Will and Bob peeked through a corner of the curtain.

They saw the man again tread on the toe of one of the big boots.

The little boy winced as if in expectation of the needle thrust, but as none came he looked relieved and did not cry out, as was evidently expected of him.

The lecturer glared at him, but did not dare repeat the trick, so he let the matter pass, and covered it up with some glib words.

As soon as he was done he intended to see what was wrong with the trick, for he was satisfied the boy would have cried out if the pin had stuck him.

As he walked away to get the people over to the fortune-teller, Will raised the curtain.

"Hi, sonny, we spoiled that game," he said.

Big-Foot Willie looked down and understood.

He smiled in a sad way.

"He'll fix it again in a few minutes," he replied.

"I don't think he will. Look there," and Will held up the piece of wood with the needle in it.

Then he dropped the curtain, and he and Bob, watching their chance, joined the outgoing crowd.

CHAPTER VII.

PALMYRA AGAIN—THE WARNING.

"Have you any idea where the nearest police station is, Bob?" Will asked, as soon as they reached the sidewalk.

"Yep; but I think you're foolish to go there," replied Bob.

"Why so? Those rascals will fix that thing up so that it will work to-morrow, and then torture the boy again," said Will. "It's got to be exposed and stopped for good."

"Then you'll get in trouble, for those fakirs will follow you up till they get square with you. Better not butt in. We've done the little beggar a good turn for to-night. Maybe he'll give the show the shake. He's a fool if he doesn't," said Bob.

"If I thought he'd quit I'd let the matter go," said Will.

"If he doesn't, after what he sees he's up against, he doesn't deserve any sympathy," said Bob.

The boys walked up the Bowery a short distance and then Bob came to a stop before another cheap show.

The sidewalk placard read: "Grand Vaudeville Show."

Among the names of the performers special attention was called to "M'selle Palmyra, in her Great Skipping Rope Dance."

"Come on in. It's your treat this time," said Bob.

The show was going on.

The boys walked in after Will had expended twenty cents for tickets.

The seats were arranged on either side of a center aisle.

The room was fairly full, but as two seats had been vacated up front, Will led the way to them.

While they were walking up the aisle, the violinist, cornetist and pianist started the entrance cue of the headliner of the show, and M'selle Palmyra came gliding out on the little stage.

The moment Will's eyes lighted on the girl, who was hardly fifteen, he recognized her.

She was the girl he had befriended and rescued from the attack of Ladrone, the Italian.

The girl saw him, too, and knew him in an instant.

Her surprise was so great that she paused as she was in the act of commencing her dance.

Then, with the skipping rope in her hands, she blew a kiss at him, and began.

Everybody, including Bob, noticed the fair dancer's action, and the crowd supposed Will was one of her particular friends.

They all envied him, for the girl was a beauty, and required no stage preparation to enhance her charms.

"I say," said Bob, as they took their seats, "look out. That little dame is tryin' to work you."

"What do you mean?" replied Will.

"Why, look at the kiss she blew at you. She must think you're a rich man's son in disguise," chuckled Bob.

"Nonsense! I've met her before."

"The dickens you have! Where?"

"Uptown on the East side."

The girl was the recipient of much applause, for she danced with exceeding grace and skill, miles ahead of the Bowery standard of such exhibitions.

Indeed, she would have made a hit with any high-class vaudeville show in the city, in her special turn.

As she danced she kept her eyes on Will when she could, and at the close of her dance she kissed her fingers at him again as she retired.

She had to respond to a thunderous encore, and repeated a part of her act.

"She's a beaut," said Bob. "How did you come to know her?"

"I'll tell you when we get outside," replied Will.

At that moment the face of Flavio Ladrone peered from the shelter of the stage "wings."

His roving black eyes soon singled Will out.

He had not forgotten the downfall he had received at the boy's hands.

It was his nature to hunger for revenge.

He had been unable to trace the whereabouts of Will, but hoped the boy would some time cross his path.

At last his wish was gratified.

The boy had come to the show where Palmyra was performing.

"Ha!" he muttered, as he drew back. "He is here. Good. I will fix him."

The curtain was rung down for an intermission of five minutes.

The orchestra sat back in their chairs and regaled themselves on beer, brought to them from the saloon next door.

Ladrone called a tough-looking young man to him.

He took him to the edge of the curtain, which he pulled slightly aside.

"You see those two boys in the second row next to the big man?" he said.

"I guess yes," replied the tough. "What about them?"

"I wish much that I get my hands on the one next to the man."

"What do you want with him?"

"I have a grudge I wish to settle with him," replied Ladrone.

"You can't pull off any scrap in this place, Ladrone," said the tough. "The boss doesn't want to give the cops cause for closin' up the show."

"I do not mean to do anything here. I am no fool. I want to entice him to some place where it will be safe for me to settle scores with him. If you help me to do that I will make it right with you."

"Come up with a five-spot and I will get him around to the 'Gridiron,' on Blank street. If you intend to do him up, there is a trap-door in the cellar that opens on a break in the sewer. You can drop him in, and he'll be carried out into the river. That will land him in the morgue."

"You think you can do that?" said the Italian, eagerly.

"I can do a whole lot for five bones."

"Good. Here is the money. I will be at the 'Gridiron' in one hour. I shall expect to see the boy when I come there."

"You leave it to me, Ladrone," said the tough, moving away.

A serio-comic singer, who was standing behind the nearest wing waiting for the curtain to rise on her turn, heard the confab between the Italian and the tough, and she wondered what the boy had done to arouse the former's enmity.

She judged Ladrone was a bad man, and felt sorry for the young fellow outside.

She hadn't much time to consider the matter, for a bell tinkled and up went the curtain.

After she had done her turn she went back to the room used by the female artists, and found Palmyra dressed in her ordinary attire.

She immediately told the girl about the conversation she had overheard between Ladrone and the stage hand.

Palmyra was alarmed for the safety of the boy who had protected her, and she determined to warn him if she could; if not, she would try to save him, anyway.

It seemed impossible for her to communicate with Will, for she knew that her task-master was waiting outside to take her to the tenement where they lived.

They had changed their place of abode from uptown, where Will met her, to a street off Grand.

The "Gridiron" saloon was only a couple of blocks from her new home, but she did not know that.

But she believed she could find it by following Ladrone as he left her at the house.

It occurred to her, however, that the singer might be able to convey a warning to the boy from her.

It was unfortunate, however, that she did not know Will's name.

She told the serio-comic of her desire to warn the boy of his danger, and asked her how it could be accomplished.

"I'll give him the tip if I can," replied the singer.

"But you do not know him," said Palmyra.

"I piped him off in the second row," said the young woman. "He was sitting next to a stout man."

"Yes, yes," replied Palmyra, eagerly. "That is the boy."

"What's his name? You know, I suppose, seeing that you take such interest in him."

"No, I do not know his name," said the dancer, regretfully. "I wish I did."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. I'll find it out for you if I connect with him."

The matter being arranged between them, Palmyra left the dressing-room.

While waiting for the girl, Ladrone had thought of a plan to assist his scheme.

As soon as Palmyra appeared he took her to a table and handed her a piece of paper and a pencil.

"Write what I say," he said, in his usual brow-beating way.

Wondering what he wanted her to write, the girl took the pencil.

"Begin," said the Italian. "Meet me in half an hour at

the corner of — and Blank streets. I wish to speak to you." Why do you hesitate? Write it down or I will beat you when we get home."

Tremblingly she wrote what he wanted.

"Now sign your name."

"Why should I?" she said. "I do not expect to——"

"Write!" hissed Ladrone.

Standing in mortal terror of the man, she could only obey.

With an evil smile he folded the paper and walked away to find the tough.

The fellow was talking to a friend of his, and Will was the subject of their conversation.

"Here is a note that will fetch the boy I want. Read it and then get somebody to hand it to him. You understand, eh?"

The tough read the note and nodded.

"That will make matters easy for me," he said. "Barney," he added to another stage hand, "I want you to hand this note to that young fellow I pointed out to you. Better take it to him at once before he leaves the show."

The other tough said he would, and the note was handed to him.

He glanced from the wings and saw that Will was still seated outside.

He immediately left the stage by a side entrance, walked down the side aisle next the wall and came up the center one.

"Let's get out," said Will, at that moment; "this show is getting worse as it goes on. They must have put all the bad acts at the end."

"All right," replied Bob, who had had enough of it.

As they stepped out into the main aisle the tough stage hand stopped Will.

"Here's a note for you, from Miss Palmyra," he said.

"A note for me!" exclaimed Will.

"Yep. She pointed you out to me. Said she didn't know your name, and told me to hand it to you," said the tough.

"All right," replied Will, taking it, much pleased to receive a communication from the lovely dancer. "Much obliged."

"You're welcome," answered the fellow, walking away.

"What did the fellow want with you?" asked Bob, as Will rejoined him near the door.

"He stopped me to hand me this note. It's from Miss Palmyra."

"Gee! You don't say. She's got her eye on you. Maybe it's an invitation to call on her," grinned Bob.

Will stopped long enough to read the few pencilled words, written by the girl in an unsteady hand.

"She wants me to meet her right away at the corner of — and Blank streets, as she has something to say to me," said Will.

"Corner of — and Blank streets!" said Bob. "That's a tough neighborhood."

"I'm afraid she's used to tough neighborhoods. I feel sorry for her, for she's under the control of as rascally an Italian as walks on two feet," said Will.

"That so? You know considerable about her."

"Not a great deal. Will you come with me and show me the way there? I'll introduce you to her."

"Sure I'll come. It wouldn't be safe for you to go alone. The two of us can make out all right, I guess."

"Come along, then, and I'll tell you how I made Palmyra's acquaintance."

As they started off a young woman, with a rather bold face, slipped up and caught Will by the arm.

"You know Miss Palmyra?" she said.

"Yes," said Will, in some surprise, now recognizing the party as the serio-comic vocalist who had appeared on the stage in the show they had just left.

"You are in danger from her guardian, Flavio Ladrone. She told me to warn you to get home right away."

"Get home right away!" cried Will. "Why, she sent me a note to meet her at the corner of ——— and Blank streets, and we are going there now."

"Let me see the note," said the woman.

Will handed it to her.

"That's her writing," said the performer, with a puzzled expression. "I don't understand it. The 'Gridiron' is only half a block from that corner, and there's a plot on foot to get you there and do you up—drop you down a trap in the cellar into the sewer. If I were you I wouldn't keep this date. I'm thinking there's something wrong about it. After what Palmyra said to me she wouldn't write such a note—unless she was forced to do so. Maybe it's a plan of the Italian. You'd better not go. It looks crooked to me."

Will looked at Bob.

"I guess you'd better give it up," said Bob. "It's after eleven now, and that locality is dangerous. Is the Italian down on you for any reason?"

"Yes. I knocked him out one night, and I dare say he'd like to get back at me," admitted Will.

"That settles it," said Bob. "We don't go to Blank street."

The vocalist clinched the matter by repeating to the boys what she had overheard in the wings—the conversation between Ladrone and the stage hand.

"Ladrone must have got Palmyra to write that note as a decoy for you," she concluded. "By staying away you will disappoint him, and probably save your life."

"Thanks for your warning," said Will. "We'll follow it."

"Good-night," said the singer, walking rapidly away.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE CELLAR OF THE "GRIDIRON."

"I guess you've had a lucky escape," said Bob, as they turned around and started back for the lodging-house.

"I guess so, too," admitted Will.

At that moment they heard a scream behind them.

They turned around to see what was the matter.

Ladrone and his associate, the head stage hand, had hold of the serio-comic vocalist, and were apparently making things hot for her.

Palmyra was trying to save the young woman.

"I'll bet those rascals were watching you when the girl handed you the warning, and suspecting what she told us when turned around and started back, they are tryin' to get back at her," said Bob.

"Then it's up to us to stand by her," said Will, resolutely. "Come on."

He made a dash for the scene of trouble, but had hardly gone half a dozen steps when two men rushed at him, grabbed him, pushed Bob aside and shoved him into a night hawk cab standing at the curb.

One got in with him and held him down on the seat.

The other slammed the door and signaled the driver.

The jehu whipped up at once, and the vehicle rolled away.

Bob made a running jump, caught on behind and was carried off, too.

The fellow on the sidewalk didn't notice the bootblack's performance, for he was hurrying to the scene of the row on the sidewalk, where a crowd had already collected around the vocalist, the Italian, Palmyra and the stage hand.

He put his fingers to his mouth and gave a peculiar signal.

Immediately the stage hand let go of the vocalist, and said something to the Italian.

Ladrone understood, and released the young woman, also.

"You can go," he said. "I guess we make a mistake."

He grabbed Palmyra by the arm and led her away, and when a policeman reached the scene the disturbance was over, and the actors scattered.

The truth of the matter was that Ladrone and the stage hand had seen the vocalist stop the boys and talk to them.

Suspecting that Palmyra had told her to warn Will, the Italian was wild with rage, and was for rushing on the young woman and doing her a serious injury.

The stage hand restrained him, and suggested the plan, which was carried out as we have seen, to capture the boy.

He hastily put two of his heelers on the job.

They were hanging around outside the saloon next to the show.

If the boys turned back after the young woman left them it would be plain to them that she had warned them.

The stage hand and Ladrone were then to jump on the vocalist and raise a row to attract attention, while the two heelers were to take advantage of it to seize Will and put him into the cab, the driver of which was to be taken into their confidence.

The scheme worked out in great shape, to the rascals' satisfaction, and poor Will was carried along at a rapid rate to the notorious "Gridiron" saloon in Blank street, he and his captors, as well as the driver, oblivious of the fact that the plucky Bob was hanging on behind, intent on his companion's rescue.

The head stage hand went back to his duties, which were about over for the night, while Ladrone marched Palmyra home with him, intending to lock her in her room, and then proceed to the "Gridiron" to accomplish his vengeful purpose.

The cab dashed up to the side door of the saloon and stopped.

The heeler inside had choked Will into a state of semi-unconsciousness.

He opened the cab door, took the boy in his arms and started for the side entrance.

Then Bob, who had alighted, chipped in with a rush.

smashing him in the face with his fist, and causing him to partially drop his burden.

The driver, seeing how things were, sprang down with his whip and laid Bob out with the butt end of it.

Several hard characters standing near did not offer to interfere.

Grabbing Bob the cabby threw him into his vehicle, slammed the door and hastily drove away, just as the heeler, with a bleeding nose, hurried into the building with Will.

He carried the boy into a back room where four men were playing cards.

One of these men was the silk-hatted sport who ran the sideshow on the Bowery that Will and Bob had patronized earlier in the evening.

Another was the lecturer of the same show.

The third was the barker, and the fourth was another attache.

Perched in a chair, half asleep, was the famished looking youth who had posed as "Big-Foot Willie."

A glance at his feet now would have disclosed the fact that they were no larger than a boy of his size and weight would have.

He woke up when the man came in with Will in his arms.

His sharp little eyes instantly recognized the prisoner as the boy who had done him such a kind turn that evening.

He was on the alert at once to find out why Will had been brought into that joint, the character of which he was fully acquainted with.

His first impression was that the proprietor of the side show, under whose thumb he was, had discovered in some way that Will was responsible for the failure of the shoe trick to act, after its first few successful performances, and had laid wires successfully to capture him, with the view of punishing him for butting in.

He soon saw that this idea was wrong, for the silk hat man showed no interest in the coming of the heeler and his prisoner; neither did any of his companions.

"I want to reach the cellar," said the heeler. "How can I get there?"

"That door will take you to the cellar stairs," said the barker, with a curious look at Will. "Look out that you don't break your neck goin' down."

"Gimme some matches," said the heeler.

The barker shoved half a dozen across the table and the heeler took them up.

Then he kicked the door open and went out.

The famished youth looked at the four men around the table, and seeing that they were all intent on their game, he slipped noiselessly out of his chair, glided over to the door, and followed the heeler and his prisoner.

Will was deposited in a corner of the cellar.

It was a filthy place, reeking with dirt and rubbish.

Half of it was boarded off for the accommodation of beer and other liquor barrels connected with the saloon.

Entrance to this part was had from the sidewalk by stone steps, covered by an inclined pair of cellar flaps, which worked on hinges, and was secured by a padlock underneath.

The door between the two parts of the cellars was locked, and the key was kept in the bar of the saloon.

There was no way of imprisoning Will in the side where he was brought without tying him, which the heeler proceeded to do with some of the odd pieces of hay-rope that lay around promiscuously on the floor.

After binding his arms, he tied his legs to a post, and finished up by gagging him.

Will recovered his energies while the heeler was binding him, and he tried to get away from the rascal, but found he was at too great a disadvantage to do anything.

Satisfied that the boy couldn't get away, he left him, and went to the street door to watch for Ladrone, who was expected to come soon.

Left alone in the darkness, with all kinds of villainous odors in his nose, Will the waif felt that he was in a truly bad plight.

And he certainly was.

Yet all unknown to him there was help near.

The little act of kindness he had done that night for a poor, downtrodden lad was to redound to his interest a hundred-fold.

He was "Marked for Death," like the hero of the play he had witnessed at the old Bowery Theater on the night he came into possession of the pocketbook, but his life was to be saved by the lad who masqueraded under the name of "Big-Foot Willie."

The reader will understand that his thoughts were far from cheerful.

He was a plucky boy, but nevertheless he feared the outcome of his next meeting with the Italian.

Ladrone was not built on forgiving lines.

He looked for his pound of flesh every time, and insisted on good measure.

Will did not know the man as others knew him, but his encounter with him, brief as it was, had given him a pretty good idea of what he might expect in the way of mercy when his enemy had all the advantage on his own side.

While Will was struggling with dismal thoughts he heard a noise in the dark.

He thought it was a rat, for rodents might be looked for in such a cellar.

The sound approached him in a stealthy way.

Then he seemed to distinguish the breathing of a human being.

Was that the Italian approaching him in a sly and cautious manner?

Was he to be murdered in the dark?

"Hist! Where are you?" came a boyish voice.

What a blessed relief to his overstrung nerves!

Could it be that Bob had followed the cab, and had managed to penetrate the cellar?

Hardly that, for the voice did not sound like his.

Gladly would he have answered, but the gag prevented him.

Yet he knew not what boy would come to his rescue there.

The only thing he could do was to make a noise with his heels on the boards.

It guided "Willie" to his side.

He felt a hand slip over his body up to his face.

It paused for a moment and then the gag was removed.

"Thanks," cried Will. "Who are you who have come to help me?"

"I am 'Big-Foot Willie.'"

"What!" exclaimed Will, in astonishment. "Are you, really?"

"Yes."

"Did you see me brought here?"

"Yes. You did me a big favor to-night, and I'm going to pay it back."

Swish!

The cord that held his arms was severed.

Swish! Swish!

His legs were released.

Will sprang up a free boy, and he grasped the bogus curiosity gratefully by the hand.

"You have more than repaid me, and I can't thank you enough. What's your real name? I want to know who you are."

"Willie Day."

"And my name is Will, too. Will Warren. We are a pair of Wills."

"Come, we must get you out of this. Follow me, and make no noise."

He led the way toward the cellar stairs.

They were about to mount them when the steps of men sounded on the floor overhead.

Then a lantern flashed down the steps, and Will's heart gave a great thump as he heard Ladrone's disagreeable voice.

"We are caught!" gasped Willie Day.

Apparently they were.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECOGNITION.

Will grasped his companion by the arm and pulled him under the ladder just as Ladrone and the heeler came down.

"Where is he?" asked the Italian.

"Over in that corner," replied the other, pointing into the darkness. "He's bound hand and foot and gagged."

"Good. We will take a look at him and then hunt for the trap."

"Do you mean to dump him into the sewer?" asked the heeler.

"Why not? Dead boys tell no tales."

"Then I won't have a hand in it. He's nothin' to me."

"You can go after I've seen the boy."

The two men moved toward the corner.

"Now is our chance," whispered Will.

Ladrone raised the lantern and flashed it into the corner.

The spot was vacant.

"He isn't there," he cried.

"Not there!" cried the heeler, who was close to the wall, feeling his way through the debris. "He must be——"

Then something happened that took his breath.

Not being aware that at a certain point in the wall there was a spring connecting with the trap over the break in the sewer, he had moved his hand along the stone, as a man might under the circumstances.

As he spoke his finger came in contact with the spring and mechanically pressed it.

The Italian, as fate would have it, was standing on the trap at the time.

It dropped like the trap of a gallows, downward, and without noise.

With a cry of terror Ladrone and the lantern fell through, as a stage demon slips down through a theatrical trap.

There was another cry, followed by a splash—silence.

Ladrone was whisked away to his death under the streets of the far East side to the dark river beyond.

The fate he had intended for Will overtook himself—swift and sudden.

The heeler was staggered; so were Will and his companion.

None of the three could grasp the significance of the tragedy just enacted.

"Where are you?" cried the heeler, in a half panic.

He got no reply.

The disappearance of the Italian stupefied him for the moment.

The vanishing of the lantern left him in darkness.

He called again without result.

Satisfied that something was wrong, he felt for a match and struck it.

Then he advanced cautiously.

Suddenly he found himself looking down into a dark void.

The low rush of water met his ears.

He knelt down and flashed a second match into the hole.

While he was thus engaged the two boys sneaked softly up the stairs.

Willie Day opened a door which led into a small yard.

They passed outside.

He took Will to another door through which came a dim light.

Opening it he piloted our hero into a room at the back of the saloon.

It was after midnight, but there were no signs yet of the front door being closed.

The place was fairly well filled with hard-looking actors.

"We must go through the saloon to reach the street," said Willie Day.

"We may be stopped," said Will.

"No. The bar-keeper knows me. It's all right."

As they started three policemen entered, accompanied by Bob Short.

Their appearance somewhat startled the habitués, who regarded them with no pleasant looks.

"Bob!" cried Will, rushing forward.

"Hello, here he is!" cried the surprised Bob, grabbing his friend.

"Is this the boy?" asked the chief officer of Bob.

"Yep; he's the chicken," was the reply.

"I thought you said he was a prisoner here?"

"So I was," put in Will, "but this boy helped me to escape."

"Who is he? I've seen him before somewhere," said Bob.

"Sure you have. You saw him in the sideshow this evening. He's Big-Foot Willie," said Will.

"You don't mean it," cried Bob. "Come outside. There's a girl there waitin'."

"A girl!" exclaimed Will.

"Yep. Can't you guess who she is?"

"Not Palmyra!"

"Yep. The Italian locked her in their rooms, but suspecting something was on the hooks by his manner, she escaped through a window and came here to see if you had got into trouble after all. We met her, and I told her how you had been captured and brought here in a cab. Where's the Italian?"

"I believe he fell through the trap in the cellar."

"Come along, you lads. We have no further business here," said the officer.

Bob was anxious to know how Ladrone could have fallen through the trap.

"I'll explain what I saw later," said Will as the party made their exit.

When they looked for Willie Day he was not with them. Neither was he in the saloon.

He had vanished upstairs to his sleeping quarters, satisfied with having rescued the boy who had done him a good turn that night.

Palmyra rushed up to Will and actually hugged him in her joy at seeing him free and unharmed.

Then she stepped back in maidenly confusion.

Will explained to the officer how Willie Day had helped him to escape, but said nothing about the Italian and the officer.

When they reached the police station Palmyra said she'd have to hurry back to the tenement where she lived.

She was fearful lest Ladrone had already preceded her.

"Don't worry about him," said Will. "I don't believe you'll see him to-night."

The boys accompanied her to the tenement, and on the way Will explained what had happened in the cellar of the "Gridiron."

"Do you think he fell into the sewer?" asked the girl.

"If the sewer was open under that trap, I'm thinking he did."

"Then he's a goner," said Bob.

"If he is dead I will be free of him at last," said Palmyra.

"Which will be a good thing for you, I guess," said Will.

Will promised to meet her in front of the show where she was engaged on the following evening at eight.

Then they bade her good-night and started for the lodging-house, where they expected to meet with trouble in getting in at that late hour.

Fortunately they found the watchman sitting at the door, as the night was warm, and they managed to pass him on satisfying him that they were regular lodgers.

After supper that evening Will and Bob started for the Bowery again.

When they came to the sideshow Will paid a dime to enter for the purpose of seeing if Willie Day was on exhibition.

He was, and he recognized our hero with every demonstration of pleasure.

He told Will that he had threatened to run away if the needle device wasn't cut out, and the boss had reluctantly agreed to do away with it.

It was arranged that when the lecturer trod on the end of his boot he was to pretend to be hurt, and after some rehearsal, "Big-Foot Willie" and the professor found they could pull off the trick in good shape.

Bob waited outside till Will rejoined him, and then they went to the other show where they stood around till Palmyra and the serio-comic vocalist appeared together.

"Did Ladrone show up?" asked Will, the moment they came together.

"No. His body was found in the river this morning, and I've gone to live with Miss Smith," replied Palmyra.

"And I'm glad to have her," said the vocalist. "She's well rid of that man. But I hear you were caught and taken to the 'Gridiron' last night, after all. You were lucky to make your escape. Tell me about it."

Will told the particulars of his capture and brief imprisonment in the cellar of the "Gridiron," and said that his rescue was due to the efforts of a boy named Willie Day, who he had an idea lived in the building.

He explained how he and Bob first saw him posing as a big-footed freak in a sideshow further down the Bowery.

"His feet are no bigger than they ought to be," he went on. "When he's on exhibition he has them stuffed in a pair of big shoes which are screwed to the platform. We made his acquaintance owing to an ingenious device installed by the boss of the show under one of the shoes."

Will told what the device was, and the purpose for which it was constructed.

"I put it out of commission, and Willie Day was grateful to me for doing so. It was to repay me that he ventured into the cellar and released me from my bonds. Had he not come to my rescue, it is likely I'd have been thrown into the sewer, and that my body, instead of Ladrone's, would have been pulled out of the East river," he concluded.

Palmyra gave Will her new address, and told him she hoped he would call on her.

Will and Bob continued their stroll up the Bowery, and thence up Third avenue till they came to Fourteenth street, when they turned along that lighted thoroughfare and walked toward Union square.

They stopped in front of a big vaudeville theater, facing the square, to look at the pictures of the performers on the bill for that week.

As they turned away a cab rolled up to the curb, and two young men in evening clothes jumped out and started for the entrance of the theater.

In one of them Will recognized the person from whom the pocketbook had been stolen in front of the Atlantic Garden.

CHAPTER X.

WILL FINDS THE OWNER OF THE POCKETBOOK.

Will rushed up to the young man at once and said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, can I speak with you a moment?"

The young fellow stopped and regarded the poorly-dressed boy with a displeased expression.

"Go way, boy. I haven't any change to give out."

"I don't want any money. I want——"

"Well, what do you want?" asked the young man, impatiently.

"Will you tell me if your initials are J. C.?" said Will.

The young man looked at the bootblack in some surprise.

"Yes, they are. How did you know, and what about it?"

"Didn't you lose a pocketbook in front of the Atlantic Garden about a month ago?"

The young man uttered an exclamation.

"Yes, I did. What do you know about it?" he said, sharply.

"I saw a man take it out of your pocket and walk off with it. I followed him and got it away from him. I hurried back to give it to you, but you and your friend had gone away in a cab. I opened the pocketbook to see what was in it. I found some money and other things, so I put an advt. in the —— paper for three days asking the owner to write me. I got lots of replies, but not from the person who owned the wallet. I afterward advertised in the ——, but without success. I have the pocketbook ready to hand over to you as soon as you tell me what was in it, which, of course, you can easily do," said Will.

The two young men looked at the boy as if he were a new kind of animal, or a remarkable curiosity.

That a lad of his condition in life should exert himself to find the owner of a pocketbook containing a considerable amount of money, and a diamond ring valued at \$600, which he had got hold of, passed their comprehension.

They almost wondered if he was really sane, for such an exhibition of honesty was almost astonishing to them.

Say, young fellow, do you mean to tell me you have kept that pocketbook all this time without spending any of the \$180 that was in it, or pawning that diamond ring?" said J. S.

"Yes, sir. I admit I used a couple of dollars for the advts., but the receipts are in place of the money. I thought it was right for me to do that," returned Will, earnestly.

"And you stopped me to give me back my property, eh?"

"I haven't got it with me. I wouldn't dare carry it around with me; but it is safe, and if you will tell me where I can see you to-morrow I will bring you the pocketbook."

"Well, if this doesn't get my goat!" cried J. C. "What do you think, Harley?"

"It is certainly most extraordinary," admitted his friend. "This boy must be one of those rough diamonds we sometimes read about in the newspapers. He deserves a good reward. You'll be mighty glad to get that ring back. I know you'd rather have that than the money, even if there was \$1,000 in the wallet."

"That's right," replied J. C. "Well, my lad, you seem to be an honest boy. I am certainly astonished to find that a person who seems to be in such poor circumstances as yourself was able to resist such a temptation. I suspect that most anybody else would have appropriated the money and the diamond ring, and made no attempt to find the owner. How did you know that my initials are J. C.?"

"Those initials are stamped on the outside flap of the pocketbook," replied Will.

"So they are. Well, here is my card and business address. Call at that store any time to-morrow between nine and five and you will find me. I will see that you lose nothing by your honesty."

"I'll be there, sir, about half-past nine," said Will, taking the card. "I'm awfully glad to have met you, for I was anxious to return the pocketbook."

Will rejoined Bob, and the two young men entered the theater.

"Why did you stop those chaps?" asked Bob. "You had a long chin with them."

When Will had explained his friend was duly astonished.

"So that was the geezer who lost the wallet?" said Bob.

"Yes. Here is his card. His name is John Converse, of Converse, Harley & Co., Hides and Leather, on Platt street. I guess he is the son of the head boss," said Will.

"It's funny you should meet him by accident," said Bob.

"That's the only way I could expect to meet him."

Bob admitted that fact, and the boys continued their walk.

Next morning when the boys went to breakfast Will did not have his boot-blackening kit with him.

"I'm not going to work till after I've returned the pocketbook," he said to Bob.

His friend nodded and went off alone.

Promptly at 9.30 Will presented himself at the hide and leather establishment of Converse, Harley & Co., on Platt street, near the Brooklyn Bridge.

He asked one of the porters for John Converse.

"You'll find him back in the office," was the reply.

So Will walked to the rear of the store where a partition, partly of glass, divided off the counting-room and the private offices of the firm from the rest of the place.

A white-haired man, who was the head bookkeeper and cashier, stood at his desk in front of a small opening in the glass partition.

"I want to see John Converse," Will said, looking through the opening.

"John," called the bookkeeper, "there's a boy here who wants to see you."

The young man came out of one of the private rooms, opened the door and saw Will.

"So you're on hand, I see," he said, in a friendly way. "Come in."

Converse took him into the office and shut the door.

"Sit down, young man. I neglected to ask your name last evening. What is it?"

"Will Warren."

"You have brought my wallet?"

"Yes," said Will, putting his hand in his pocket to get it.

"Wait a moment till I describe it and its contents. We might as well do things regular."

He proceeded to give the necessary information.

"It's yours, all right," said Will, and he laid it on the desk.

Converse opened it, took out the roll of bills and laid it down.

Then he pulled out the ring.

"Have you any idea what that ring is worth, Warren?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"You are a thoroughly square lad, I see. Well, that ring cost me \$600. It was intended for a young lady I think a great deal of. I had to buy a duplicate, for I never expected to see that one again."

"I'm sorry I wasn't able to restore it to you sooner, but it wasn't my fault."

"Of course it wasn't."

"If you had looked in the lost and found column of either of those papers you would have seen the advt., a copy of which you see I pinned to the receipts."

"Young as you are, you do things in a methodical manner, I perceive. Now, what can I do for you to express my sense of obligation?"

"It isn't necessary for you to do anything. I am satisfied with having returned you what belongs to you," said Will.

"That won't do. Your sterling honesty merits a substantial reward. You can have the money," and Converse pushed the roll toward him.

"No, sir, I won't take that. If you want to give me ten dollars——"

"Ten dollars! Nonsense! What's ten dollars?"

"It's a lot of money to me."

"It is, and yet you refused to annex \$180 and a diamond ring worth \$600 when the chance was yours to do so."

"I am not a thief," replied Will, proudly. "The pocket-book was not mine, and I never would have touched a thing in it."

Converse looked at him attentively.

He was greatly attracted by the boy's face and attitude.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"At the Newsboys' Lodging-house."

"Then you have no home or parents?"

"No, sir."

"A waif, eh? How long have you been out on the world?"

"About a month."

"Only a month?" said Converse, in surprise. "Who did you live with before you went to the lodging-house?"

"A man named Hooley."

"A relative?"

"No, sir."

"You left him for reasons of your own, I suppose?"

"No, sir; he left me. He turned me out because he was going away from the city and couldn't take me with him."

"I see. Your parents died some time ago."

"I don't remember them, sir."

"No? They must have died when you were very young, then. By the way, you haven't told me how you got hold of my pocketbook. I think you said last night that a man picked my pocket and you followed him and recovered my property. How did you manage it?"

Will told him the particulars.

"What are you doing for a living?" asked Converse.

"Blackening boots on the street."

"Wouldn't you like to do something better than that?"

"I would," replied Will, eagerly.

"Very well. We need an office boy. The one we had left last Saturday, and we haven't filled his place yet. You

can have the position. We paid him \$5 a week, but as you have to support yourself, we'll give you \$7 as a starter. What do you say?"

"I'll be glad to take it, sir."

"Very good. You'll need a better suit of clothes. Here is a \$50 bill. Spend it on yourself, and report here in the morning at eight o'clock."

"I am very much obliged to you," said Will, gratefully.

"Are you the head of the firm?"

"No. My father is the head partner, but he is an invalid, and I and his partner's son are managing the business. We are only the Co. yet, but in time we expect to be the firm. Come with me."

He took Will into the next room and introduced him to the other junior partner, Fred Harley.

"I have hired him in Tom's place," said Converse.

Harley nodded his approval.

Converse then introduced Will to the head bookkeeper, and also to the chief porter, telling them both that Will was the new office boy and would report on the following morning.

Will then took his leave.

He felt like shouting with joy.

He was through with the bootblackening industry forever, and now had a position in which there was a future.

With these exhilarating thoughts he started off to buy himself a new suit and other things that he felt he needed.

CHAPTER XI.

HIS LITTLE SWEETHEART.

Bob kept an eye out for Will, and as time passed and he didn't show up, he wondered what was keeping him.

He went to his lunch alone that day.

When he got back he saw a well-dressed boy approaching him, and was somewhat staggered when he recognized him as his particular friend.

He rushed up to him.

"Say, you're comin' the swell, aren't you?"

"I hope not," replied Will, with a smile.

"Why, you're all togged out to beat the band. Come now, let me finish you off with a shine."

"Go ahead," said Will, with a light laugh.

"You must have got a good haul out of the geezer you returned the pocketbook to," said Bob, as he began to shine 'em up.

"Yes, I did better than I expected."

"How much did he give you?"

"He gave me \$50 to dress myself up on."

"You didn't spend all that, did you?"

"No, I've some of the money left."

"I'll have to get a Sunday suit, too, or I won't be able to go out with you any more. So you've cut work for to-day? I don't blame you. I'd do the same if I corraled \$50. Business has been rather slow, anyway."

"I'm not going to black boots any more," said Will.

"What!" cried Bob, pausing in his work. "Are you goin' to shake the business?"

"Yes; I'm through with it."

Bob gave him a blank look.

"And you're goin' to shake me, too, now that you've got prosperous, eh?" he said, a bit resentfully.

"Not at all. I expect to see you every night and morning, same as usual."

"What are you goin' to do in the daytime?"

"The party I returned the pocketbook to hired me as office boy in his store. He happened to be in need of one."

"You don't say! What business is it?"

"Hides and leather."

"And the store is on Platt street?"

"Yes, near Gold."

"What are you goin' to do there? Run errands?"

"I suppose so, and help around the office."

"How much is the firm goin' to pay you?"

"Seven dollars a week."

"You made as much as that shinin' shoes. I often make \$10 when luck is good."

"I'll get more after awhile. The other boy only got \$5."

"It's good wages for an office boy. I know a feller who only gets \$1 for runnin' errands, sweepin' up, and such things," said Bob. "And I know another who's in a printin' office, and he only gets \$3.50."

"I'm glad to get a steady job that has a future to it. A fellow can't always black boots for a living, at least not on the street. I want to get up in the world."

"I don't blame you. You're better educated than me, though you never went to school. You've always taken to books and learnin', while I haven't. You'll be a gent one of these days. There you are. I've given you a ten-cent shine."

"And here's ten cents for it," said Will.

"No, you don't. You can't pay me a cent, I don't care how prosperous you are," said Bob, decidedly, picking up the coin and handing it back.

"Very well, Bob, I'll make it right with you some other way."

"Goin' to stay at the lodgin'-house?"

"I guess so, for the present."

"That's right. I don't want to lose you altogether."

"I'll walk down to the Battery now, for I'm interfering with your business."

"What's the difference? You'll come back, won't you?"

"Sure, and then we'll go to supper together. We'll have an extra good meal to night in honor of my new job."

"You ought to take in a show, too."

"We will. We'll go to one of the uptown theatres and see a first-class performance."

Bob wasn't sure that he cared to see some of the shows at the uptown theaters.

They didn't look promising to him.

He preferred a good, lurid melodrama to "Lady Wildermere's Fan," or "The Case of Rebellious Susan."

"The Bronco Buster" was at the Bowery that week, and it looked good to him.

But as Will was going to pay for the tickets, he felt he couldn't kick.

Will made his appearance at the hide and leather store at eight in the morning, and the head porter told him that it would be his first duty to dust off the desk in the counting-room and private offices.

About the time he had finished this the clerks began coming in.

The cashier told him to fill all the ink bottles, and attend to other odd jobs.

Fred Harley came in at nine and wished him good morning.

He had acquired a very favorable opinion of Will from young Converse, who had taken a decided fancy to the boy.

Will ran several errands that morning, and when noon came he was told he could go to lunch any time between twelve and a quarter of one, and take half an hour.

He showed such an anxiety to please that the clerks judged that he would make a very good office boy.

At quarter of three one of the clerks took him around to the firm's bank, and showed him how to make the daily deposit, which was a part of his duty.

When five o'clock came work stopped in the counting-room, and the head bookkeeper put the books and papers in the big office safe.

Will was told that his duties were over for the day, and that he could go.

He put on his hat and walked down to Bob's stamping ground, lately his own, also.

He contrasted his new position with the bootblackening industry, and he felt that good luck had certainly handed him a real gold brick.

Bob was attending to one of his "regulars" when Will arrived in his vicinity, and our hero waited for him to finish.

"Hello, Will," he said. "How did the first day go at your new place?"

"First rate. I like the work very much. It's easy and pleasant."

"You're in luck. I'm beginnin' to wish I had a job like that myself. You don't have to worry about gettin' customers now. Your money is sure on pay-day."

Next day was Saturday and business closed down at one o'clock at that time of the year.

Will received a full week's wages.

When he counted the money he told the cashier that he didn't think he was entitled to more than two days' pay.

The head bookkeeper smiled and told him not to worry, as it was the custom of the house to pay a full week where a new employee came to work at any time during the week.

"This establishment has been in business thirty years or more and has always done it. Put the money in your pocket and say no more about it," he said.

Will went to lunch and then hiked down to find Bob.

"I got a full week's wages for a day and a half's work," he told his friend.

"Gee! You don't say. They must have money to burn in your place," said Bob.

"It's a solid house, I guess. Been in business over thirty years."

"You have certainly fallen on your feet. If they should want another boy to wrestle with the hides and leather, put in a good word for me, will you?"

"Sure I will. I should like to have you there."

That evening Will and Bob went up the Bowery again to see Palmyra dance, and give the serio-comic vocalist, Miss Smith, a hand.

It was their last week at this house, as they were going to appear at a regular theater in Brooklyn on the following week.

The agent of a theatrical agency had "discovered" Palmyra, and offered her a chance at a big vaudeville house,

but she refused to accept unless Miss Smith was also provided for at the same theater.

Argument failed to move her, as did terms that were dazzling to her, and the agent had to try to make the rifle, for he counted on making money out of the girl.

The management of the theater consented to put Miss Smith in Monday afternoon's bill, and if she made good to continue her, otherwise she would get the hook, figuratively speaking.

To provide against Palmyra quitting in that case the agent was careful to get her name to a contract.

Miss Smith did two turns on the Bowery, and between them Palmyra did her dance.

The house had been crowded at every performance since the girl's specialty had caught on, and Bob and Will had to stand up at the back, for every seat was taken when they got to the show.

Palmyra was greeted with thunderous applause, and she was recalled several times.

Each time Miss Smith came out Will and Bob started a round of applause.

She couldn't help seeing the boys, and smiled at them.

Palmyra was put wise to their presence, and kissed her fingers to them.

About the time they were expected to leave the show the boys went outside and waited by a side entrance till they came, then they all went to Miss Smith's room, and remained an hour talking.

Miss Smith wished to treat to beer, but the boys said they didn't drink.

Will, however, went out and bought a quart of ice cream.

It was on this occasion that Palmyra learned for the first time that Will had a steady job in a wholesale house.

The boys promised to go to Brooklyn on Monday night and see her dance in a regular theater.

"Do you know, Palmyra," said Will, privately to her, "I don't like the idea of you making a business of dancing. I know you're a dandy at it, but somehow I'd prefer you didn't take up with the profession. Of course it's none of my business what you do, and you mustn't feel provoked with me; but somehow I think a lot of you—just as if you were my sister—and it would please me much if you adopted some other line of business aside from the theaters."

"I'll do anything to please you, Will," she said, casting down her eyes.

"Then you must care a little for me?"

"I do. I like you better than anybody in the world."

"And I like you better than anybody in the world."

"Then you want me to stop dancing?"

"I won't go as far as that just yet, Palmyra, as you can make good money at it; but you mustn't accept any work outside of New York and Brooklyn. That will give me the chance to see you right along, and protect you if you need protection."

"I promise to do as you wish," she replied. "And I'll stop whenever you tell me to."

"Thank you, Palmyra. Shall I consider you my sweetheart?"

"Yes," she said, with a vivid blush.

Then, seeing that Miss Smith and Bob were looking another way, he drew her to him and kissed her.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LIKENESS TO THE DEAD.

Some weeks passed away and Will had got thoroughly broken into his duties in the hide and leather establishment.

Young Converse and Fred Harley were much pleased at his aptitude for the business, and with his earnest endeavors to make good.

"He is certainly an uncommonly fine lad," said the former. "We couldn't have got a better boy if we had tried."

"I agree with you," said Harley. "By the way, there is something in that boy's face that seems familiar to me. I've been trying to think who he puts me in mind of, but it's beyond me. I don't know whether it's his face, or the expression that rests on it sometimes, but, hang me, it reminds me of somebody."

"I guess it's only your imagination," laughed Converse. "By his own account he's a waif, the son of poor people, no doubt, who died when he was too young to know his loss. However, he's got the makings of a smart man, and I shall be surprised if he doesn't some day rise to the top of the heap."

The announcement that a gentleman wished to see Converse put an end to the conversation, and the young man went into his own office.

Will saw Palmyra several times a week now.

She and Miss Smith were living in a small flat up in West Thirty-eighth street, near Broadway, which they had taken with two chorus ladies engaged for the run of a summer attraction on a roof garden.

Palmyra was dancing at that show, at \$150 per week, which was just ten times as much as she received on the Bowery when she made her debut there, while Miss Smith was "resting"; that is, she hadn't been able to find a manager willing to put her in his bill.

On Will's advice Palmyra put the greater part of her money in a saving's bank when the "ghost walked" on Monday.

This prevented her from lavishing it on the impecunious professional people who constantly dropped in at the flat with the view of "touching" her for a V.

Young Converse had spoken so glowingly at home about the firm's new office boy, that Mr. Converse, Sr., was curious to see the lad who resisted the temptation of appropriating \$180 cash and a \$600 diamond ring when the chance to do so came his way.

It was finally decided that Will should be invited to take tea at the house on Sunday evening after he had been a month at the store.

The invitation was duly extended to him by Converse, Jr., who said that his father, who was the head of the firm, particularly desired to see him.

Will regarded the invitation as equivalent to an order, and he accepted it.

He was expected to arrive at the Converse home, which was a fine brownstone front on Madison avenue, near Sixtieth street, about five.

He and Bob dined at a restaurant about one, and then Will said he was going to spend most of the afternoon with

Palmyra at the flat, and suggested that Bob, who now had a Sunday suit, should go with him.

"You can stop there to supper, after I leave. I'll get Palmyra to invite you. Put in the evening there, and after I have finished my visit at the boss' house I'll come back to the flat after you," said Will.

"All right," said Bob, who had already made himself quite popular with Miss Smith and the two chorus ladies.

So the boys took a car and rode up Broadway to West Thirty-eighth street.

Will rang the bell of the third flat, which had four names pasted on the letter box, as follows:

Miss Smith—Miss Palmyra—Cora Sand—Gladys Dexter.

The lock of the door clicked and they entered the lower corridor.

Two flights of stairs landed them on the third floor, where they found Cora Sand standing in a flowered wrapper which had seen better days.

"Hello, Will," cried the young woman, familiarly, "come to see your best girl?"

"Surest thing you know, Miss Sand. Is she in?"

"Is she? I should remark that she is, and watching for you. Hello, Bob; come in and make yourself at home," said Miss Sand.

They walked in.

A vision of loveliness in a fluffy dress darted out of the front room, a pair of plump arms were thrown around Will's neck, and a happy, blushing face was pressed close to his own.

"I'm so glad you've come, Will," said Palmyra, as she disengaged herself from the embrace she had invited.

"You didn't imagine I wasn't coming, did you?" replied Will, as they entered the room where they found Bob already seated between Miss Sand and Miss Smith, on a lounge, while two chairs opposite were occupied by Miss Dexter and a smooth-faced young man, in his shirt sleeves, who was introduced to Will as Dick Tupper, a performer in vaudeville.

"Glad to know you, Warren. You're in the business, I suppose?"

"No, I haven't the honor," replied Will.

"Indeed! Do you know I took you for Warren, of Warren and Snigsby, sidewalk conversationalists. I was going to touch you for a wheeze for my new act," said Tupper, glibly.

Will smiled, though the application of the word "wheeze" was not very intelligible to him.

He found out later that a wheeze was a joke or clever saying that was generally regarded as funny.

"Mr. Tupper is doing a clever skit with his partner at the Vic," said Miss Dexter, for Will's information.

"Are you doing well with it, Mr. Tupper?" Will inquired.

"Am I? Say, we're knocking 'em cold. Greatest go of the week. We ought to have been billed as headliners. We've got the top-notchers skinned to death. Why, young Ham said we were the whole show," said Tupper, enthusiastically.

Mr. Tupper continued to speak about the astonishing merits of his act.

In the midst of it Will whispered to his sweetheart that they had better adjourn to the dining-room, where they could enjoy a private talk.

This suited Palmyra, and they excused themselves from the general company.

More professional people called, and the little sitting-room became quite crowded, but nobody intruded on Will and Palmyra, though Miss Smith, or Miss Sand, or Miss Dexter came out at intervals for bottles of liquid refreshment for their guests, and, of course, they always had something to say to the two young people.

At length the clock marked 4.30, and Will said he'd have to go and keep his engagement at Mr. Converse's.

Palmyra was sorry to have him go, but he assured her that he would return for Bob some time during the evening.

Then he got up and they went into the sitting-room, where Will was introduced to the newcomers, and Palmyra to two or three she had never met before.

Will remained a few minutes longer and then took his leave.

At five minutes of five he rang the bell at the Converse residence and was admitted by the maid, who showed him upstairs into the family sitting-room, where he was welcomed by young Converse.

He was then presented to Roger Converse, the young man's father.

The moment the elder Converse's eyes rested on the boy's face the words of welcome died on his lips, and he stared fixedly at him.

With an effort he recovered himself and then expressed the pleasure he felt at meeting a lad so highly spoken of by his son.

Will was not a little disconcerted by the strange look which the invalid merchant bent on him, and he made something of a mess of his reply.

From the boy's face Roger Converse's gaze turned to the picture of a lovely woman hanging against the wall, painted by an artist of note.

There was an astonishing similarity in the expression which rested on the boy's face and that of the portrait.

A stranger not acquainted with Will's past would have jumped to the conclusion that the two were mother and son.

Roger Converse was so startled himself by the resemblance that his face went white, and he showed so much emotion as to attract the notice of his son.

"What's the matter, father?" asked the younger man. "Are you ill?"

"No, no," replied the elder man, in a dreamy tone, "I was just thinking."

Jack Converse looked at him attentively, and then saw that his father was looking at his dead wife's picture.

He understood, or thought he did, the cause of his father's sudden display of emotion, for he knew that his mother's death had nearly finished his father.

He had never recovered from it.

Nevertheless the young man could not understand why his father should have been overcome at that particular time.

He often looked up at his wife's pictured face without giving any outward sign of emotion.

However, with his young employee in the room he felt that it was no time to dwell on the matter.

During the interval before tea was announced, Roger Converse furtively watched the boy's face, and the more he looked at him the more restless he became.

Just before the bell rang a pleasant-faced, middle-aged lady entered the room.

She was Mrs. Hamilton, Roger Converse's widowed sister, and Jack's aunt.

Will was introduced to her.

She took an instant liking to Will, and showed it by her cordial manner toward him.

Then the tea bell rang.

"Come along, Will," said Jack, starting for the door, with his hand on the boy's arm. "My father will come with my aunt."

As they disappeared in the direction of the wide staircase, Roger Converse started up in a feverish way.

"Lily," he said, in a tone so agitated as to attract her wondering attention, "did you notice it?"

"Notice what, Roger, dear?" said the lady, going to her brother to assist him on his feet.

"That boy's face."

"It's a fine, manly face, and it puts me in mind of somebody I know," she said, a puzzled expression resting on her features.

"Somebody you know? Can't you remember? Look at my wife's picture."

The words came in a compressed, agitated way.

Mrs. Hamilton looked at the picture of her departed sister-in-law.

"Heavens!" she cried, with a gasp. "The very likeness!"

The gaze of brother and sister met, but neither spoke.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILL TELLS WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT HIMSELF.

When Mrs. Hamilton and her brother appeared at the table, the lady looked at Will with a new and strange interest.

His remarkable likeness to the portrait on the wall of the sitting-room brought to her mind a mournful chapter in the family history.

This was the mysterious disappearance of the second son born to Roger Converse and his wife.

At the age of two years he vanished one day without leaving a clue behind.

The nurse was in the habit of taking him to the park in his carriage almost every fine day.

One afternoon she carried him there, as usual.

Her attention was taken by an old woman who approached for a few cents, in the name of charity.

The stranger gave her a hard luck story, and she came up with a nickel.

When the woman walked slowly away the nurse found that her charge was missing from his carriage.

In a few minutes there was a scene, but to make the story short that was the last of little Harry Converse.

Will enjoyed the tea very much indeed, for it was served in a style to which he was not accustomed, and everything tasted uncommonly nice.

After the meal they went back to the sitting-room, and for awhile the talk was general, then Roger Converse got Will by his side.

"You are an orphan, I understand?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Will.

"You remember your parents, I presume?"

"No, sir."

"No? Haven't you the faintest recollection of them?"

"Not the slightest."

"With whom is your earliest recollection connected?"

"An old woman, whom I called Mother Hodge, and a man by the name of Hooley. Neither claimed to be relatives, nor would they tell me anything about my parents, or where I was born. The woman, I recollect, was very good to me, and taught me to read and write, and to do arithmetic sums. She seemed to be well educated, but you wouldn't think it to look at her. Four years ago she had trouble with the man, Hooley, and he ordered her to go. She went, and I have never seen her since."

"But you know at any rate that your name is Warren," said the merchant, in an eager, tremulous tone.

"I suppose it is, I don't know. Hooley told me it was. About the only name he called me was 'young sculpin,' when he was in good humor or bad. Sometimes he called me worse. I would have run away from him had I dared, but he was the one man I seemed truly to fear. He knocked me around as if I amounted to nothing, and I was forced to put up with it."

"And how came you to get away from him finally?"

"Something happened that obliged him to leave the city in a hurry. He told me that he couldn't take me with him, and ordered me out of the house at once, though it was about ten o'clock at night, and I had never been away on my own responsibility before."

"When was it you left him?"

"About two months and a half ago, at the beginning of summer."

"What part of the city did you live in?"

"Way up in the Bronx, where houses were few."

"You remember the street, of course?"

"Yes. It was Lydenhurst avenue, near ——— street."

"The man's name was Hooley, you say?"

"Yes; Bill Hooley."

"And the woman's, Mother Hodge?"

"She had another name, but I don't recall it now. I always called her Mother Hodge, and so did Bill, when he was sober."

"There is the picture of Mrs. Converse, who died three years ago," said the merchant, in a choking tone, calling Will's attention to the portrait.

The boy looked at it, as he might at any picture.

"She is a splendid looking lady," he said.

"You—you don't remember ever seeing a face like that before, do you?" asked Roger Converse, eagerly.

"No—never," replied Will, wondering at the question. The merchant looked like a man keenly disappointed.

"Well, you must come and see me again. I am very much interested in you. I want to know you better. My son says you are the best office boy we have ever had. He is quite taken with you, and so is Mr. Harley. You will be advanced to a position in the counting-room one of these

days. There is no reason why you should not turn out to be a successful man."

Nine o'clock came around sooner than Will expected, and then he said he thought it was time to go.

The merchant said good-night to him in a yearning kind of way.

Mrs. Hamilton wished him good-night kindly, and said she hoped she would see him soon again.

Jack Converse saw him to the door, and said good-night there.

When Will reached the flat in West Thirty-eighth street he found some new faces, and everybody, including Bob, appeared to be enjoying themselves.

A performer had brought a guitar around, and when Will was admitted there was a song and chorus under way.

Palmyra took immediate possession of him, and they sat together on the lounge.

The conversation was distinctly professional, and Will didn't half understand the stage slang that was bandied about.

Bob, however, had got on to it by this time, and he was an interested listener.

Before the evening was half over Bob had dreams of joining the profession.

The only drawback was he didn't know what he could do.

Finally he broached the subject to one of the male visitors.

"Want to be an actor, eh?" grinned the young man.

"Yes, I think it's a good business," said Bob.

"Can you sing?"

"No."

"Perhaps you can dance?"

Bob admitted that he was shy in that respect.

"Well, can't you do any kind of stunt at all?"

"Nothin' that I know of," confessed Bob, his hopes dropping to the zero mark.

"Well, if you can't do anything, my boy, you're cut out for the legitimate," chuckled the vaudeville artist.

Bob was about to inquire what the legitimate was when Gladys Dexter called the young man away from his side.

At this stage of the game somebody asked Will to sing.

He was about to decline when Cora Sand said that as everybody else had obliged, he ought to hold his end up.

"But I'm not a professional singer," protested Will.

"What's the difference?" chipped in a performer. "Do the best you can. We won't criticize you."

"I only know one song, and that's an old one," he said.

"What is it?"

"The Old Folks at Home."

"Just the thing. We'll all join in the chorus. Hit her up, Fitz," he said to the guitar player.

Fitz played the prelude softly, and Will, feeling that he was in for it, began.

It happened that he had a naturally fine tenor voice, and when he began he created something of a sensation.

He sang it now just as he sang it many a time in the garret in the old house in the Bronx, with feeling, and more to himself than the assembled company.

Indeed, as the melody went on, the sitting-room and its occupants faded before him, and he seemed to be back in

the garret again, with a vision of his unknown mother before his eyes.

All conversation ceased in the room, and the crowd listened in distinct admiration to his clear, bell-like notes.

When he began the chorus not a voice chimed in till he had finished it, and then, as if by one consent, the company repeated it.

Will sang the three verses, and the company took up the chorus.

When the guitar ceased the crowd vociferously applauded Will.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

The week that followed passed away as the preceding four had done, and Will continued to make a good impression at the office.

One morning a stranger came into the office and had an interview with Harley, young Converse being out at the time.

Will was called in.

"You lived with a man named Bill Hooley, otherwise known as 'The Gorilla,' up on Lydenhurst avenue, didn't you?" said the man.

"Yes, sir."

"Now, you know that Hooley was an ex-convict and crook, don't you?"

"I always suspected he was a bad man," replied Will, his heart failing him, for he feared what this exposure might mean to his job.

"Oh, you did! Then why did you stay with him?" asked the man, sharply.

"Because I was afraid to leave him. I feared he would kill me."

"But you did leave him on the night he fled after the murder."

"He put me out."

The man looked skeptical.

"You knew he killed a man on Boston Road that afternoon, didn't you?"

"I didn't know it till I read it in the paper after I left the house."

"Why didn't you go to the police and report what you knew about Hooley, and give a clue to his whereabouts?"

"I didn't think about doing it. I was only too glad to get away from Bill."

"Well, young man, you are under arrest. You've got to go to Headquarters."

"Under arrest!" gasped Bill.

"Yes; I'm a detective. We've been looking for you since the day of the murder. The chief thinks maybe you can throw some light on it, seeing as you hung out so long with Hooley. At any rate, he wants to talk with you."

Will looked appealingly at Harley.

"I'm sorry, Will, but I'm afraid you'll have to go; but don't worry. You have friends who will see you through."

So Will was carried to Police Headquarters and locked up.

That afternoon he was put through the terrible third degree, and the results rather surprised the chief, though it also disappointed him.

Will was sent back to his cell.

In the meantime an order was served on the police compelling them to produce the boy in court next morning.

A prominent lawyer was on hand with Jack Converse, and a fight was made for Will's release.

Will told his story in court, and the magistrate decided that he would have to hold him, for he might ultimately be required as a witness against Hooley.

The lawyer then asked that the magistrate fix bail.

This was placed at \$1,000, and Jack Converse qualified as a surety, whereupon Will was released.

Jack Converse took Will back to the store, and into his private room.

There he and Harley assured him that his arrest would make no difference with his standing in the establishment.

As soon as he got off work at five o'clock he hurried up-town to see Palmyra.

She had read the story in the morning and afternoon papers, and was much distressed over his arrest.

He comforted her and told her it would be all right.

At seven o'clock he reached the Converse residence, where he had promised to dine.

Here he received a welcome that made him feel a good deal better.

Roger Converse and Mrs. Hamilton told him that they felt sure he was guilty of nothing he need feel ashamed of.

He thanked them gratefully, and ate his dinner with some relish.

A heavy thunderstorm came on as he was preparing to leave, and he was prevailed upon to remain all night.

He was shown to a spare chamber and lost no time getting into bed.

About two in the morning he was awakened by a flash of light in his eyes and an exclamation in a man's voice.

He started up and was seized by the throat with a grip of steel.

"Utter a word, you young sculpin, and it will be your last," hissed a voice.

"Bill!" gasped the boy, recognizing the tones, so well known to him.

"Ah! You know me?"

"What are you doing in this house?"

"What are you doin' in it? Have you found your way back to your own?"

"What do you mean?"

"Look here, my lad, if you want to escape with your life you'll keep still. I won't be taken alive, d'ye understand? You know me well enough to understand that I am a bad man when driven into a corner."

Will suddenly stretched out his hand and seized the butt of the revolver he saw sticking out of Hooley's pocket.

It was cocked.

As the man released his throat and seized the weapon, to regain possession of it, it went off, and Bill, with a hoarse cry, staggered back and fell to the floor.

Will sprang out of bed, picked up the dark lantern and flashed it over Bill.

"You've done for me, you young sculpin, but at any rate I'll never go to the electric chair," said the ruffian.

The shot had alarmed the house and Jack Converse came running into the room to see what had happened.

"What's this?" he exclaimed in astonishment.

"I've shot Bill Hooley," replied Will.

"Bill Hooley! The murderer! How came he in the house?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir. All I know is that when I awoke I saw him bending over me. He threatened my life, and I did the best I could to protect myself."

"Where did you get the revolver?"

"Out of Bill's pocket."

"He's finished me," groaned Hooley. "Well, what's the difference? It's right that his hand should be the one to send me out of the world. I stole him when a baby for reasons which don't matter now. Where is Roger Converse? Bring him here, for I've somethin' to tell him."

The merchant was brought after a few minutes, and then Bill confessed that Will was his lost youngest son.

"If you want more evidence, go down to No. 6 — street. You'll find the old woman, Mother Hodge, there. She helped me do the trick. Tell her I confessed, and she'll do the rest," said Bill.

Then he fainted.

The police and an ambulance were sent for, and Bill, desperately wounded, was taken away.

Before daylight Mother Hodge was located by Jack Converse and a detective and brought to the house, where, on hearing of Bill's statement, she confessed everything.

In consideration of Will's intercession the old woman was allowed to go, and was even rewarded with a \$50 bill.

Great was the joy of the Converse household when the fact was fully demonstrated that Will Warren was beyond all doubt the long lost Harry Converse.

The fattened calf was killed in great shape, and Will was established in his own home, to which he had been a stranger for about fourteen years.

In his first flush of happiness Will didn't forget Palmyra and Bob.

At his request they were both brought to the house and informed of the alteration in his circumstances, and their amazement may be imagined.

After a heart-to-heart talk with his aunt, Palmyra was taken into the family under Mrs. Hamilton's wing to be educated up to the standard required of her as Will's future life partner.

At the store, Will was taken into the counting-room right away, and at his earnest request his late job was given to Bob.

Bill Hooley did not die of his wound after all, but recovered to pay the extreme penalty in the electric chair for the Boston Road murder.

Three years later Will, now Harry Converse, was admitted as the junior partner of the hide and leather house, and thus he rose from a bootblack to a merchant.

Next week's issue will contain "PRINCE OF THE CURB; OR, A COLLEGE BOY IN WALL STREET."

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GOOD STORIES.

In France, when a convict is sentenced to death by the guillotine, the day of his execution is not named in his presence, and he knows not when he is to be led forth until within fifteen minutes of the fatal moment.

Japanese theatres are still conducted on strictly Oriental lines—that is to say, they are open from nine in the morning till seven or eight in the evening, and the play is in progress all the time. The price of admission is as low as one cent, and for this one has the option of staying all day.

The valuable material from which meerschaum pipes are made is continually getting scarcer, and the large industry which has flourished in Vienna, Budapest, Nuremberg, Paris and in the Thuringian town of Ruhla seems endangered. The manufacture of meerschaum pipes is much more important than is generally supposed. The town of Ruhla alone has been exporting in round figures to the value of about \$1,500,000 annually. The finest grade of meerschaum is found near Eski-Schelir, in Anatolia, Asia Minor, in a hollow, which in early days was a lake, in which the meerschaum was precipitated. Meerschaum is also found in other places, including Thebes, Egypt, the Bosnian Mountains in the neighborhood of Grubschitz, and Nuendorff in Moravia, and in some sections of Spain and Portugal.

Assemblyman Struckenbruck, the farmer-blacksmith of San Joaquin, Cal., is devoting a great deal of his time to getting votes for his bill to permit the shooting of meadow larks. He says that the birds destroy not only grain, but have lately developed a fondness for melons that is proving disastrous to the cantaloupe crop. One of the strongest bits of evidence cited by Struckenbruck is that when the agricultural demonstration train of the University of California was sent through the State to teach the farmers how to raise their crops on scientific principles the meadow lark, properly stuffed and mounted, occupied a dishonored place among the exhibits as a "pest." Observation in the fields has also shown that the bird is too busy picking up the farmers' grain to devote any time to singing. He claims that the lark, whose rippling melody, which was once the harbinger of spring and the inspiration of rhymesters, has now become an ordinary thief.

"When brooks, streams and ponds become dry most fishes die," says Francis B. Brennan, of Philadelphia. "Some kinds, however, like eels and catfish, are able to survive for a con-

siderable time by burrowing into the wet or moist bottom, which may be quite dry at the surface. This is particularly true of some tropical fishes found in regions subject to drought, where it is a matter of common observation that a pond depression that has been baked by the sun's rays for days or weeks, will immediately after a heavy rainfall, afford good fishing. The ability of certain tropical fishes endure drought and to remain out of the water for a long time in the markets, depends on the possession of an accessory gill on the under side of each gill cover, by means of which oxygen may be taken directly from the atmosphere. Failure to notice dead fish after the drying out of brooks or ponds simply means that birds and four-footed beasts, often night prowlers, have been there first. One of the most important lines of work carried on by the fisheries branch of the Government is the rescue of food and game fishes from the overflowed lands in the Mississippi Valley. After the floods subside, shallow pools are left that are wholly disconnected from the streams, and in these the fishes gradually perish as the drying of the pools progresses. By sending men to seine these pools the Government each year saves and returns to public waters hundreds of thousands of valuable fishes."

JOKES AND JESTS.

Cholly—I was that frightened my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. Bertie—My dear old boy, I can smell that clove now.

The Romancer—When you have money, people will shake you by the hand.—The Philosopher—When it's gone they'll shake you altogether.

"I concede," he said sarcastically, "that women lie more cleverly than men. "Your concession," she replied sweetly, "in itself upsets your theory."

"My, John, you haven't a particle of tact." "What have I done now?" "Asking Mr. Hamfat to dinner and telling him you will give him a good roast! And he's a bum actor!"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Meekton and Miss Gabbie are very fond of each other." "Why I heard he didn't speak to her at all." "That's just why she likes him. He doesn't attempt to get a word in edgewise."

"It seems to me that I have heard most of the ideas advanced in your speech before." "That," said Senator Sorghum, "merely goes to show that they are good ideas which will stand wear and tear."

"I have something new in the way of a plot for a farce." "As to how?" "The action hinges on a case of mistaken identity." "I'm afraid that's a little too new," sighed the manager as he motioned the boy to open the door.

"Everybody should be made to work in this life," remarked the political economist. "I don't agree with you," answered Miss Cayenne; "there are too many people who, when they try to work, merely succeed in getting in the way."

The presence of mind of an impecunious lover was illustrated recently at a bazaar, where there was a stall for the sale of watch-charms. "Oh, George," said the lady, "buy me a charm!" "Sarah," answered he, "you have too many already."

A FOREST ADVENTURE.

By Kit Clyde.

"You surely don't mean to go on to-night. The distance is good twenty miles."

"Yes," said I, "I must catch the Rhine steamer at Erlachen in the morning."

"But," objected the landlord, "there is no conveyance."

"Yes there is," I replied; "a good serviceable pair of legs. I haven't footed it over three-parts of Europe to be frightened by a score of miles over a good road."

"But," he persisted, "this is Saint John's eve."

"I wish the reverend gentleman joy of it. It is likely to be a particularly nasty bit of property, by the looks of the sky."

"Don't jest," he replied, earnestly, "especially if you insist upon pursuing your journey. The road has a bad reputation. More than one traveler, as brave as you, has repented the hour he set foot upon it to the day of their death."

"I suppose you mean that it is frequented by light-fingered gentry," I answered. "However, I have nothing to fear, since I have nothing to lose."

"It is said to be haunted," he said, "especially on Saint John's eve, by the specters of a gang of marauders who were hanged upon the scene of their crimes more than fifty years ago. You may still see the rusted chains hanging from the trees. Their bodies decayed into nothing long ago. For years these villains had infested the road: robbing and murdering defenseless travelers. The laws in those days were not strictly executed. So long as no one of note suffered at their hands, they were unmolested; but, growing bold with immunity from justice, the scoundrels committed an enormity which speedily brought them literally to the end of their rope."

"A nobleman of the neighborhood was about to marry a beautiful girl of a wealthy and distinguished family. The wedding was to take place on Saint John's Eve. It was a stormy night—just as this promises to be. Preparations had been made at the count's castle; the guests had assembled, the tables were spread, and the bishop was waiting to unite the noble pair. Nothing was wanting but the presence of the bride, who lived at some distance, and one who was to arrive in the family coach. But she did not come. Hour after hour passed; the guests grew uneasy, the expectant bridegroom distracted. At length, unable to bear the suspense any longer, the count saddled his horse, and with a party of friends, set out to search for the absent girl. They found her within a mile of the castle. The postilion and her father and sister were found with their brains knocked out, and she was discovered lying in the wet robe, stripped of her wedding jewels, and a dagger wound in her breast, dead."

"What the count felt, no one ever knew, for he never spoke of it. But all night long he and his companions scoured the woods, and at daylight the six marauders were swinging in chains beside the spot where the victims had suffered. It is said that on St. John's Eve the phantoms of the robbers and the wedding party rehearse those dreadful scenes. It may be true. What do I know? But not for millions would I travel that road to-night."

"A very pretty story," I replied, "and doubtless absolutely true. If I encounter any of the interesting personages connected with it I shall treat them with due respect for your sake."

So saying, I shook the worthy man's hand and left him wagging his head dubiously over my temerity.

The road was good, the air cool and bracing, and for the

first hour I proceeded at a swinging pace. At this point the storm, which had been threatening all the evening, burst upon me. The rain poured down in sheets, drenching me to the skin, and converting the road into a muddy torrent. The wind roared through the leafless branches of the trees with a weird, shouting sound, far from pleasant to hear.

The darkness grew so intense that I had great difficulty in keeping the track, and more than once floundered into the wet ditch beside the road. I kept up my spirits, however, and plodded steadily onward.

Near midnight I arrived at a point where the road divided into two branches which led off at right angles to each other. I paused in dismay, for I had not the least notion which I ought to take.

While I was debating the question in a very comfortable frame of mind, I heard the sound of heavy footsteps in the road behind me. Delighted at the opportunity of inquiring the way out of my dilemma, I waited at the side of the road for the approach of the travelers.

They came on at a quick pace, and as they neared me I could see that there were six of them, all men dressed in the forester's costume, a traditional attire which the peasantry are fond of assuming on occasions of holiday festivity.

They appeared to be armed; indeed I was certain that I saw a gleam of a deer knife in the belt of the one nearest me. What struck me at first as somewhat odd was the perfect silence with which they walked. They uttered no exclamation nor exchanged a word, but tramped on like mutes.

As I had hitherto found Germany a perfectly safe region I had no reason to doubt the good character of these men, in spite of their mysterious movements. I hailed them and inquired which road I ought to take in order to reach Erlachen. To my indignation and astonishment they paid no attention whatever to my words, but marched steadily onward, as if I had not spoken. I repeated my request in a louder tone, with the same result.

I was now thoroughly angry, and went up to the nearest one, with the intention of shouting in his ear, when a perfectly unaccountable sensation kept me dumb. It was not fear, nor any explicable feeling; but a species of terrible inward shrinking, as if my heart was contracting.

At this instant I noticed another startling phenomenon. I was now near enough to see the faces of the men. They gleamed as white as chalk in the obscurity—perfectly blank and colorless as the faces of the dead. I could see the dark circles of the eyes, though the pupils were invisible. The effect was altogether ghastly and ghost-like.

I refrained from attempting to hold any further communication with them, and waited in considerable mental confusion until their footsteps died away in the distance.

I presently shook off my unpleasant sensation, and concluding that the men had probably taken the main road toward Erlachen, I followed after them. I had gone perhaps a hundred paces when I detected the creak and rattle of some heavy vehicle behind me. Looking back, I knew that it must be some sort of traveling carriage from the two lamps that were upon it, which were shining like two red eyes, and casting a broad glare upon the wet road. The horses were going at a furious gallop, and I could see the steam from their bodies rising like a cloud into the damp air.

The spot where I stood was exceptionally dark and rough. The postilions seemed to be acquainted with it, for they presently pulled in their horses to a cautious walk. As soon as the equipage drew near enough I hailed the postilion upon the foremost horse and inquired the way to Erlachen. I was sure this man must have heard me, but he made no reply, neither did he turn his head in my direction.

By this time the coach was abreast of me. I walked along, keeping pace with it, and repeated my inquiry to the guard upon the box. To my rage and amazement, he too neither made reply nor looked at me. I wondered if I had come by chance upon all the deaf mutes in the country out for an airing.

I turned my attention to the coach, and perceiving dimly that it was occupied by a number of people, I shouted into the window, which, strangely enough, I found to be without glazing, and reiterated my question. There was no reply, and apparently no notice taken of me whatever.

I now began to perceive something very extraordinary about the whole equipage. By the strong light from the lamps I saw that the housings of the horses were rotten, and nearly falling apart. The dresses of the postilions were of the fashion of half a century before. The velvets, trimmed with gold and lace, seemed dropping from their limbs with age and decay. The coach itself was of an antiquated pattern and very ruinous. The iron work was rusted in holes, and the leather covering had pealed into tatters which flapped in the wind. All this was the more astonishing, since the crest of a noble family was visible upon the panels.

My amazement was augmented as my sight became better accustomed to the obscurity. The mute postilions had the same terribly white faces, the same corpse-like expression which I had seen before in the six men who had passed me. Once when the light fell strongly upon the features of the one upon the rear horse, I was horrified to see that it was absolutely the face of a man long dead.

As I looked back from the intolerable shock of this discovery, my gaze rested upon the occupants of the coach. These consisted of an old man in an ancient court dress, wig and ruffles, a young girl of twelve or fourteen, and a lady some years her senior, attired in white silk, a long lace veil, and a profusion of jewels. All three sat in opposite corners of the spacious seats, bolt upright, and staring blankly into each other's eyes, with expressionless, dead white faces. I recognized, by some inner sense rather than by sight, that these three shapes, like those of the postilions, were those of beings long dead.

Never shall I forget the horror of that moment, brief as it was, during which that grotesque and ghastly assembly remained before my fascinated gaze. The next instant the equipage passed by, leaving me reeling and tottering in the road.

But this was not the finals of the dreary drama of that night. The vehicle had gone beyond me hardly its own length, when there was a terrific confusion of sounds, cries, curses, and groans intermingled, and the coach was overturned into the road with a tremendous crash.

The lights still continued to burn, and in the glare I saw a number of dark figures, which I recognized as the men in foresters' dress who had passed me a few moments before, engaged in a desperate struggle with the postilions. Heavy, sickening blows were dealt, followed by awful cries of agony, and presently I saw three servants outstretched and bleeding in the road.

In a moment more the coach door was torn open, and I saw its occupants dragged out. Then began another horrible struggle. The old man was struck down, and the younger of the two girls quickly suffered the same fate. The elder of the two seemed to make a more desperate resistance. I could see her flying hither and thither among the men, her white dress and white face gleaming phosphorescently in the semi-darkness. I could hear her awful cries and see the downward blows of the glittering knives. At last she was seized; there was a renewed struggling among the dark

figures, a long, shrill scream that seemed to sail away in mournful echoes over the barren tree tops, and when I saw her again she was lying upon the ground with a red gash in her breast.

Will anyone ask me why I did not interpose or make some effort toward rescuing the girl? The very sight of those ghostly figures with their white faces writhing in and out of the darkness, would have paralyzed a braver man than I. I was spell-bound and frozen; I could neither move hand nor foot, nor utter a syllable. I could only stare with fascinated gaze at the weird and dreadful scene, quivering as if with an ague. I knew then, as I know now, that I was witnessing no mortal combat in which living beings were engaged and human creatures were sinning and suffering. It was an unreal struggle among the dead, and I had no power either to interfere or to fly.

The whole scene occupied but a few seconds. While I stood petrified the sounds suddenly ceased, the lights went out, and the dim figures of the men and the two girls vanished in the winking of an eye. Where they had been nothing now was visible but the wet and shining road and the black back-ground of the forest.

Then the spell seemed to leave my muscles. I sprang forward toward the spot, only to be stricken by a heavy blow full in the temple and to fall insensible in the road.

When I again became conscious it was broad daylight, and the sun was shining in my face. I arose, stiff and sore and looked round me bewilderedly. The events of the previous night were still fresh in my memory, and I involuntarily looked for traces of the terrible scene I had witnessed. But none were visible; no wrecked coach, no blood stains, no tattered garments, nothing but the rain-smoothed earth, marked only by my own footsteps.

My head felt very painful, and putting my hand to it I found that I had received a bad cut on the temple. On searching for the cause, I discovered a number of rusty chains depending from the tree over my head. One, with heavy links, hung a little lower than the others, in a line with my forehead. It was this which had given me my wound. I had fallen directly beneath the tree where the robbers had been hanged fifty years before.

Call it mere coincidence, and say that what I saw was the reminiscence of my landlord's story and dreamed in the delirium caused by my hurt—explain it upon any natural ground that you choose, I shall still adhere to my opinion of the matter.

An incident not without pathos occurred toward the end of last week at a sale of unredeemed pledges at the Mont de Piété. There were sold by auction a child's drinking cup, plate, spoon and knife and fork. Fifty-one years ago these souvenirs were deposited in the Paris municipal pawnshop. Every year since the interest has been paid regularly and the right of redemption secured, but the family never seem to have possessed the necessary 15 or 20 francs to resume possession. Evidently the poor people are either dead or have become more needy. Two years ago the interest ceased to be paid, but the department, to their credit, abstained from selling these "lares and penates." Several letters were addressed at the last known residence and to other places where the pawnners have lived, but they have come back marked "Inconnu." The sands of the glass have run out, and the objects so carefully guarded for half a century have been sold.

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March 14, 1911.

By Arthur Hubalek



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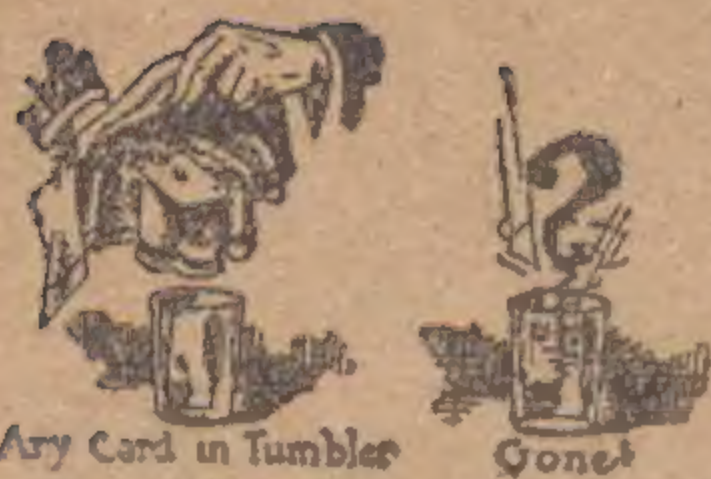
JUMPING CARD.—A pretty little trick, easy to perform. Effect: A selected card returned to the deck jumps high into the air at the performer's command. Pack is held in one hand. Price of apparatus, with enough cards to perform the trick, 10c.

M. O'NEILL,
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Frank Robinson, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



Any Card in Tumbler

Gone!

On removing the handkerchief the card has vanished and may be reproduced from any place desired. Note: A startling card trick; can be done anywhere; highly recommended.

Price, 15c.

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WONDERFUL CARD ACT.—An entire card act can be performed with these fifty-two cards. A page of printed directions accompany them. Any one can perform these apparently impossible tricks; no sleight-of-hand required. The secret lies in the cards and no one can possibly discover it, even after minute examination. The cards can be used in all games.

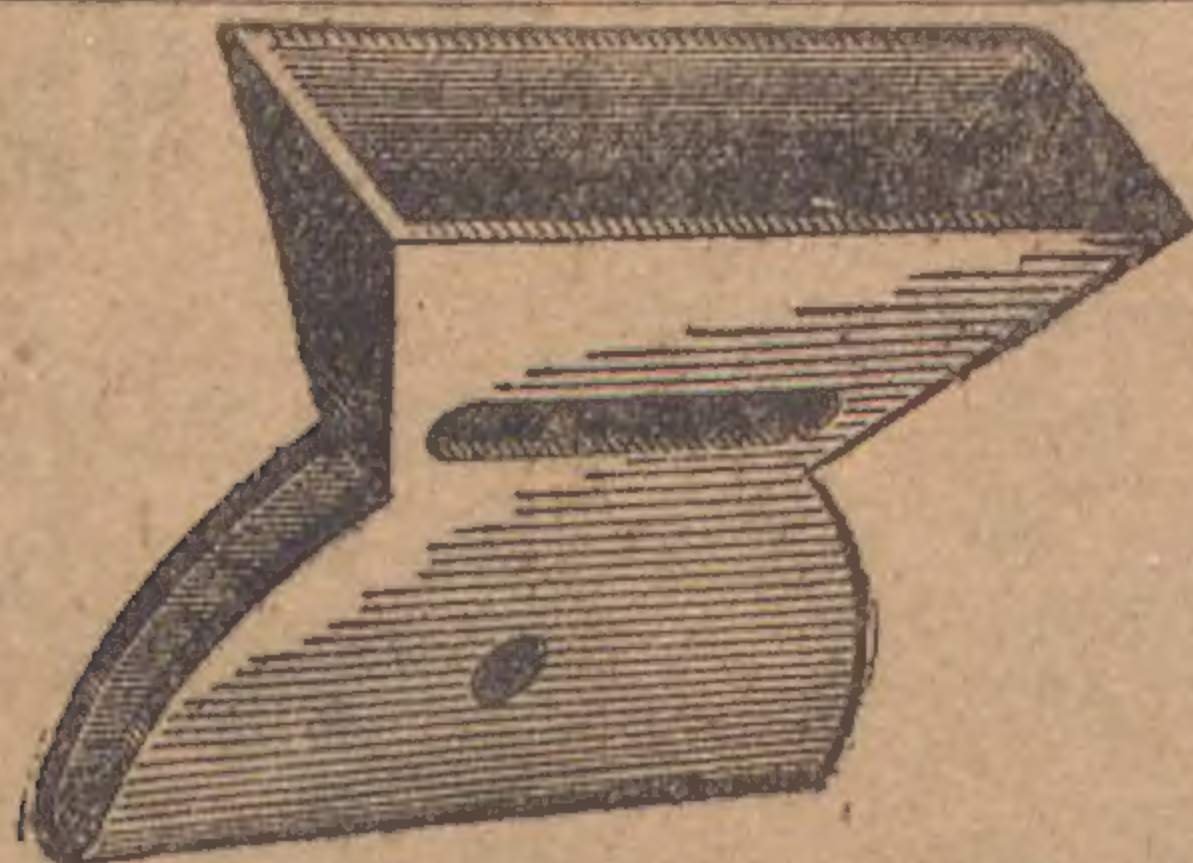
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Chas. Unger, 316 Union St., Jersey City, N. J.



THE BEST YET! RIGHT FROM THE MINT.—We sell you for 10c., postpaid, a real mysterious trick that can be done without practice. The outfit consists of 2 metal rings, a cover on which to do the trick, and the picture board which seemingly does it all. Take any coin, just place the ring over it, say "Go!" and it goes without touching it; say "Come!" and it comes back. Really clever, and your money back if you want it. Send for wholesale price.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



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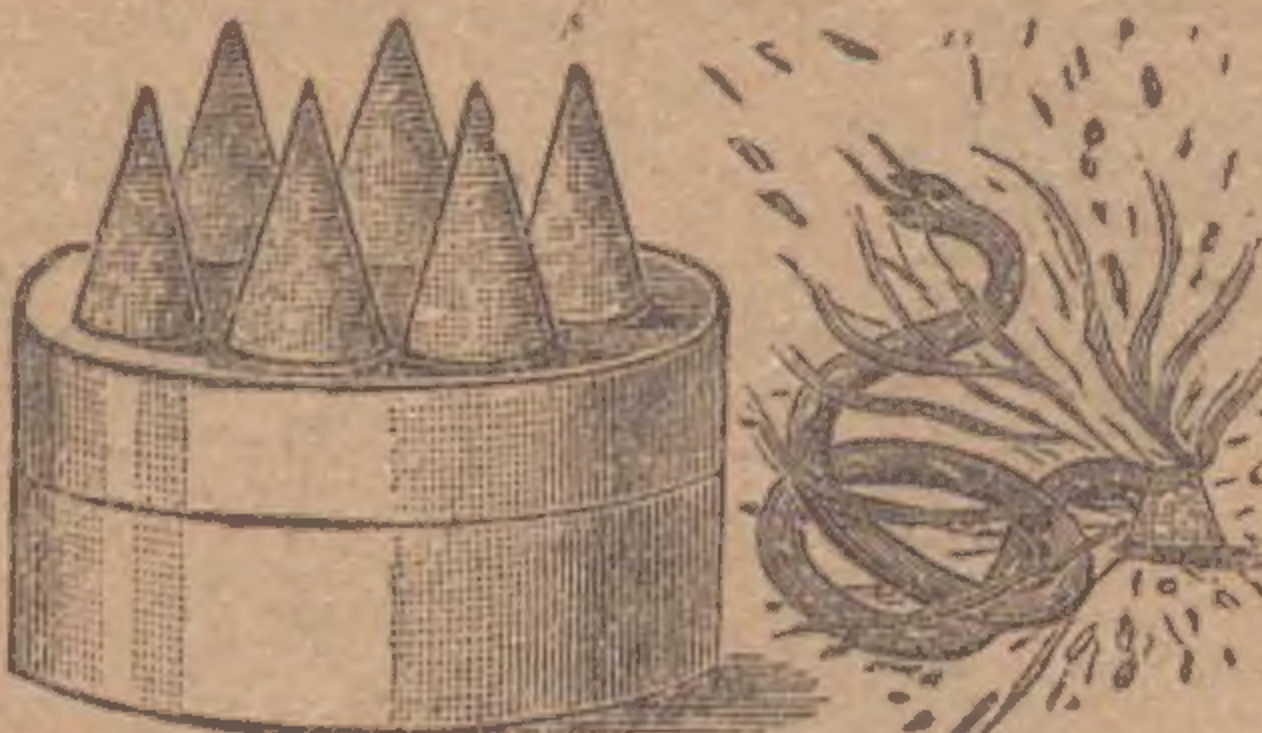


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SNAKES IN THE GRASS.

Something entirely new, consisting of six large cones, each one nearly one inch in height. Upon lighting one of these cones with a match, you see



something similar to a 4th of July exhibition of fireworks. Sparks fly in every direction, and as the cone burns down it throws out and is surrounded with what appears to be grass; at the same time a large snake uncoils himself from the burning cone, and lazily stretches out in the grass, which at last burns to ashes, but the snake remains as a curiosity unharmed. They are not at all dangerous, and can be set off in the parlor if placed on some metal surface that will not burn. An ordinary dust pan answers the purpose nicely.

Price of the six cones, packed in sawdust, in a strong wooden box, only 10 cents, 3 boxes for 25 cents 1 dozen boxes 75 cents, sent by mail post paid.

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at the same time allow the ball of your thumb to pass over the ratchet wheel of the frog, when to the company you will seem to be winding the watch, but the noise will startle them, for it will sound more like winding Barnum's steam callopie than a watch, and you can keep WINDING indefinitely. The possessor of one of these Frog Jokers can have any amount of fun with it. It is made of bronze metal and will never wear out. Do not fail to send for one.

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L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



THE ROSE IN BUT-TON HOLE.—This popular trick should open every magic entertainment. The performer, upon finding that he has forgotten to place a flower in his button hole, reaches for his wand and mysteriously waving the latter, he produces a handsome rose in the empty button hole.

Price, 25c.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

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These lively acrobats are handsomely decorated with the U. S. flag and with gold and silver stars and hearts. Upon placing them upon any flat surface they at once begin a most wonderful performance, climbing and tumbling over each other and chasing each other in every direction, as if the evil spirit was after them, causing roars of laughter from the spectators. They actually appear imbued with life. What causes them to cut up such antics is a secret that may not be known even to the owner of the unruly subjects. If you want some genuine fun send for a set of our tumblers.

Price, per set, 10 cents; mailed postpaid.

A. A. WARFORD, 16 Hart St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

KANGAROO PADLOCK.



A handsome padlock, stamped out of polished steel. It locks itself when the hasp is pressed down into the lock, but the puzzle is to unlock it. You can instantly unlock it with the key, but no one not in the secret can unlock it. You can slip the hasp through a friend's buttonhole and force him to wear it until you release it, although he may have the key to the lock;

or a boy and girl can be locked together by slipping the hasp through a buttonhole of their clothing. Many other innocent and amusing jokes can be perpetrated with it upon your friends and acquaintances. It is not only a strong, useful padlock, but one of the best puzzles ever invented. Full printed instructions sent with each lock. They are a bonanza for agents, as they can be readily sold for 25 cents each.

Our price, 15 cents; 2 for 25 cents; 1 dozen, \$1.20, sent by mail, postpaid. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

NORWEGIAN MOUSE.

A very large gray mouse, measuring 8 inches from tip of nose to end of tail. The body of mouse is hollow. Place your first finger in his body, and then by moving your finger up and down, the mouse appears to be running up your sleeve. Enter a room where there are ladies, with the mouse running up your sleeve, and you will see a rapid scattering of the fair sex. Many practical jokes can be perpetrated with this small rodent.

Price, 10 cents; 3 for 25 cents, mailed postpaid.

FRANK ROBINSON, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



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Save the front cover page headings of *this weekly*, beginning with the issue dated March 10th, 1911, and ending with the issue of July 21st, 1911. No headings dated before March 10 or after July 21 will be accepted. Send us 25 headings within these 20 weeks and we will give you a valuable gift for them. The numbers need not be consecutive. This is not a competition. Any reader can get a premium. We will describe the premium in a later issue.

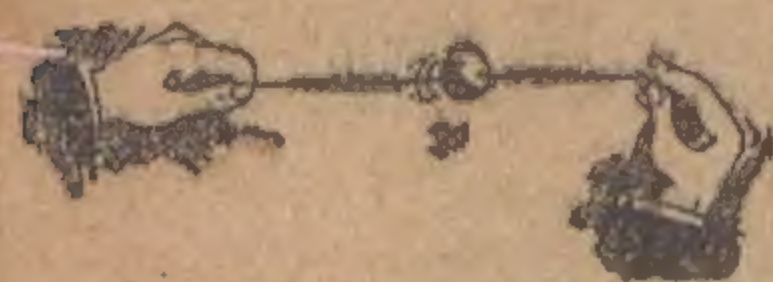
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And each 100 headings—Oh, my!

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher,

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Frank Robinson, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



MARBLE VASE.—A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase. Price, 20c.

L. Senarens, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



MAGIC CARD BOX.—A very cleverly made box of exchanging or vanishing cards. In fact, any number of tricks of this character can be performed by it. A very necessary magical accessory. Price, 15c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.



THE PRINCESS OF YOGI CARD TRICK.—Four cards are held in the form of a fan and a spectator is requested to mentally select one of the four. The cards are now shuffled and one is openly taken away and placed in

his pocket. The performer remarks that he has taken the card mentally selected by the spectator. The three cards are now displayed and the selected card is found to be missing. Reaching in his pocket the performer removes and exhibits the chosen card. Price, 15c.

Chas. Unger, 316 Union St., Jersey City, N. J.



Good Luck Banks

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M. O'NEILL,
425 W. 56th St., N. Y.



DISAPPEARING THIMBLE.—A thimble is placed on a finger-tip and then the palm of the other hand is placed over it and tightly closed. On opening the hand the thimble has entirely vanished. A pretty pocket trick. Price, 15c.

FRANK ROBINSON,
311 W. 44th St., N. Y.



RISING PENCIL.—The performer exhibits an ordinary pencil and shows it top and bottom. The pencil is laid on the palm, the performer calling attention to his hypnotic power over innate objects. The pencil is seen slowly to rise, following the movements of the other hand. The witnesses are asked to pass their hand around it to assure themselves no thread or hair is used. Price, 25c.

Chas. Unger, 316 Union St., Jersey City, N. J.



"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Price, 10c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.



THE MULTIPLYING CORKS.—A small round box is shown to be empty and one of the spectators is allowed to place three corks in it. The cover is put on and the box is handed to one of the spectators, who, upon removing the cover, finds six corks in the box. Three of the corks are now made to vanish as mysteriously as they came. Very deceptive. Price, 15c.

Frank Robinson, 311 W. 44th St., N. Y.

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- 648 Fred Fearnot at Lone Pine; or, The Mystery of the Moonshine Camp.
- 649 Fred Fearnot Playing the Game; or, Out With His New Nine.

"PLUCK AND LUCK"

- 668 Across the Pacific in a Dory; or, Two Boys' Trip to China. By Capt. Thos. H. Wilson.
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- 670 The Boy Sheriff; or, The House that Stood on the Line. By Berton Bertrew.
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- 674 The Aberdeen Athletes; or, The Boy Champions of the Century Club. By Howard Austin.
- 675 Left on Treasure Island; or, The Boy Who Was Forgotten. By Richard R. Montgomery.

"THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76"

- 533 The Liberty Boys' Dangerous Game; or, The Plan to Steal a Prince.
- 534 The Liberty Boys at Fort No. 8; or, Warm Work on the Hudson.
- 535 The Liberty Boys in Despair; or, The Disappearance of Dick Slater.
- 536 The Liberty Boys and "Deadshot Murphy"; or, Driving Back the Raiders.
- 537 The Liberty Boys' Courage; or, Baffling a British Spy.
- 538 The Liberty Boys in Old Virginia; or, The Fight at Great Bridge.
- 539 The Liberty Boys Accused; or, Defending Their Honor.
- 540 The Liberty Boys' Best Battle; or, The Surrender of Cornwallis.
- 541 The Liberty Boys and Lightfoot; or, Dick Slater's Indian Friend.

"WILD WEST WEEKLY"

- 438 Young Wild West Betrayed by a Greaser; or, Sealed in an Aztec Tomb.
- 439 Young Wild West's Fight at the Forks; or, Arietta and the Lost Emigrant Train.
- 440 Young Wild West and the Desperado; or, The Masked Men of the Mountain.
- 441 Young Wild West's Western Welcome; or, Arietta's Birthday Gift.
- 442 Young Wild West's Rapid Fire Fight; or, Holding a Cave of Gold.
- 443 Young Wild West at a Cowboy "Shindig"; or, Arietta Calling a Bluff.
- 444 Young Wild West and Senor Santo; or, The Brigands of the Border.
- 445 Young Wild West Calling the Cavalry; or, Arietta's Thrilling Ride.
- 446 Young Wild West's Ready Rifle; or, The Bullet that Found a Mark.
- 447 Young Wild West's Road Agent Hold-Up; or, Arietta Carrying the Mail.

"SECRET SERVICE"

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- 635 The Bradys and the Factory Boy; or, The Mystery of the Mill Pond.
- 636 The Bradys and the Poisoned Pen; or, Foiling a Desperate Plot.
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